

Gender within a specialist police department – an examination of the cultural dynamics of a firearms unit

Debbie Cain

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Abstract

This thesis examines the cultural dynamics within a specialist policing department with a particular focus on the issue of gender. It explores the experiences of a sample group of police officers working within the firearms unit of one metropolitan police force. Culture, the history of policing, specialist departments and the introduction of women are considered in order to gain an in depth understanding of the organisation. Previous research into police culture suggests masculine values remain intensely dominant, particularly within the firearms arena, ultimately creating an environment, which outwardly appears unattractive to women.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with twenty-one police officers including eleven male and ten female officers from Constable to Inspector rank. The research focused on the pre-joining experiences of the officers involved and also their personal experiences of life on the firearms unit. The study identified that the issues within the firearms unit appear not to be about gender: there was little evidence to suggest that officers within the firearms unit were treated differently or unfairly due to their gender. What was apparent was the presence of in-group/out-group distinctions, with an overwhelming desire from both genders to be accepted and to 'fit-in'. This has implications with regards to the research concerning occupational cultures, including police culture in particular.

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Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

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List of Abbreviations

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
AFO	Authorised Firearms Officer
ARV	Armed Response Vehicle
BAWP	British Association for Women in Policing
CBRN	Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear
CID	Criminal Investigations Department
CTU	Counter Terrorism Unit
DPG	Diplomatic Protection Group
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
ITM	Initial Tactical Module
LPU	Local Policing Unit
MAST	Mobile Armed Surveillance Team
NCIS	National Criminal Intelligence Service
NPIA	National Policing Improvement Agency
NPT	National Police Training
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
OSU	Operational Support Unit
PACE	Police and Criminal Evidence Act
PC	Police Constable
PPU	Public Protection Unit
SAT	Section Action Teams

SFO	Specialist Firearms Officer
SOCA	Serious Organised Crime Agency
SPG	Special Patrol Group
SSU	Sub-divisional Surveillance Unit
TFO	Tactical Firearms Officer
TSG	Territorial Support Group
TSO	Tactical Support Officer

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Introduction

Historically researchers have shown considerable interest in the area of police culture. More recently there has been an increased level of interest with regards to the promotion of women to senior management positions. However few studies have considered the position of women within specialist departments, an area worthy of examination due to the considerable discrepancy that continues to exist between the representation of male and female officers. Policewomen remain in the minority in the majority of specialist departments. This study will contemplate the broad concept of organisational culture, police culture, the history of policing, the development of specialist departments and the introduction of women in the police organisation. In undertaking this research I recognise that I am an insider on three levels, as a police officer, as a woman and as someone who has suffered pervasive sexism. Consequently I have firsthand experience of the culture within the organisation. This introductory chapter is divided into four main areas: police culture, women in the police, a clear outline of the aims and objectives of the research and a detailed breakdown of the subsequent chapters.

The formal culture of an organisation is reflected in policy and procedure. The day-to-day culture represents the accepted normative behaviours within the group. The culture within the police environment creates an intensely supportive, loyal group of people committed to 'fighting crime': sexist language, storytelling and humour are recognised key facets. Previous research into police culture suggests masculine values remain intensely dominant, creating an environment, which is unattractive to women thus resulting in the continued under-representation of females.

During the First World War women were required to undertake a variety of traditionally male roles to supplement the labour deficiency, this included the

police service. However the women were not sworn officers, had no real powers and were predominantly tasked with dealing with women and children (Levine, 1994, p. 34). Female officers have struggled to gain equality and acceptance resistance towards them has been incredibly strong. Segregation continued until the introduction of equalities legislation in 1973. For a number of years, despite this legislation, women were still not permitted to perform some police functions, including firearms.

Traditionally uniformed officers or detective constables conducted the majority of police work. However the modern police service no longer utilises the 'Omni-competent', generalist constable, instead police forces have created a variety of units which provide an array of specialist functionality with explicitly defined remits (Roberts & Innes, 2009, p. 339). Female under-representation is particularly evident within most specialist departments. The public protection unit is the only role where female officers are dominant: this department deals with offences relating to women and children. These departments appear to have acquired a substantially lower status, with male officers referring to them as 'Cardigan squads' (Emsley, 2009, p. 273). All other specialist departments are significantly under-represented by women.

The aim of this study is to examine the cultural dynamics of a specialist police department with a particular focus on gender. It is my intention to consider the under-representation of women within specialist departments. I will also consider the motivations for joining a specialist department and gain an understanding of the working environment of firearms officers. The experiences and attitudes of a sample of both male and female officers working within the firearms unit will be explored. By doing so, this will provide an opportunity to gain a valuable insight into the culture of the unit, enhance the existing, limited, literature available which relates to police officers working within specialist units and assist in explaining under-representation of

women within this particular role. It should also assist with making some generalisations with regards to other male dominated specialist units.

Chapter one considers the broad concept of organisational culture, identifying relevant characteristics, including exploration into the concept of group dynamics, examining both the positive and negative elements with a view to gaining some understanding of the significance of culture. This is followed by an examination of the culture within the police organisation, how culture develops and how it manifests itself within the police. By analysing previous research I endeavour to establish the fundamental characteristics of police culture. The final part of this chapter will consider the position of policewomen within the cultural aspects, as working practices and police cultures continue to have a negative impact on women: they remain the minority group within the organisation, particularly within specialist departments.

Chapter two provides an introductory overview of the origins of the British Police Service in relation to women. This details a very brief synopsis outlining the history of policing to set the research into context with regards to the integration of women. A timeline of events outlines the developments in policing and describes the formation of the British Police Service, the introduction of women during the First World War, their protective, caring and nurturing role. I then outline the changes, which resulted in the formation of the 43 forces of England and Wales, and the continued resistance towards policewomen. This chapter also looks at changes in legislation, the impact of the Sex Discrimination Act, and the continued integration of women.

Chapter three examines the departure from traditional policing strategies towards the emergence of specialist police departments. All 43 police forces in England and Wales have evolved and developed their own individual structure. From the initial creation of dedicated detectives in 1842 to the

formation of a vast array of specialist units utilising advanced equipment. Consideration is also given to the controversial past of specialist departments. Of particular interest in these emerging roles is that of female officers due to their continued under-representation within these specialist arenas.

Chapter four outlines the research methodology chosen to explore the identified issues, namely a case study. Comprehensive semi-structured interviews were utilised to explore the experiences of a sample group of firearms officers. This chapter provides a detailed rationale for the chosen methodology: it considers the implications of conducting research, using interviews as a methodology. This chapter also discusses the identification and selection of the sample group and the difficulties encountered. The subsequent results have been divided into two categories, the pre-joining and joining experiences and the reality of life on the firearms unit.

The selected group of participants were chosen to ensure an equal gender balance to address the aim of the research: examine the cultural dynamics of a specialist police department with a particular focus on gender. Due to the limited number of female officers within the chosen department it was necessary to utilise them all and a matched sample of male officers was selected. Chapter five considers the results obtained from the detailed interviews. The data were examined for any significant gender differences and the subsequent results in this chapter were divided into key themes under two headings, pre-joining and joining experiences of the officers. This included the application process, training, fitness and their personal motivations for becoming a firearms operative.

Chapter six continues to examine the results, focusing on the reality of life on the firearms unit, gaining an insight into the culture. Taking into consideration the previous literature regarding police culture and the responses from my

research the results in this section have been divided into four sections, the role of humour, the role of gender, the role of stress and the role of structural change. Stress was included in this section due to the extensive previous research, which suggests it is an issue for police officers. At the time of conducting my research interviews the firearms unit subject of this research was undergoing a dramatic restructure. The majority of participants were affected by the changes therefore it was considered a vital area for discussion.

Chapters seven and eight identify the main findings and conclusions of my research. The over-riding issues throughout history have been policewomen's struggle to gain acceptance in a male dominated environment. My research has examined the cultural dynamics of a specialist department with a particular focus on gender. I have considered the under-representation of women and the motivations of both genders for joining. Overall this research has gained an understanding of the working environment of firearms officers.

Chapter one - Organisational culture

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the broad concept of organisational culture, with a view to exploring why culture within an organisation is significant. I will then contemplate the culture within the police organisation. By analysing previous research I will be able to establish the fundamental characteristics of police culture. This accepted notion of police culture should establish the foundations for an empirical study that will be discussed in the following chapters. The final part of this chapter will consider the position of policewomen within the cultural aspects, as working practices and police cultures appear to have a negative impact on women. They remain the minority group within the organisation, particularly within specialist departments.

In order to appreciate the workings of an organisation it is vital to attempt a clear understanding of the culture as it has a significant impact on the working environment. Anthropologists suggest there are a number of specific elements to any culture, including language, rituals and social structure. All of which develop over a significant period of time in response to problems encountered in everyday life (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985, p. 461). It is a complicated concept often used to 'cover everything and consequently nothing' (Alvesson, 2002, p. 3), a broad term used to define the characteristics of an organisation (Gibling & Hirst, 2007, p. 6).

Organisational culture develops as a direct result of social interaction, repeated tasks which become routine create shared understandings which evolve into agreed meanings (Glomseth & Gottschalk, 2009, p. 4; Lynn Meek, 1994, p. 274). A culture represents everything that is learned and shared by a group of people, and includes social heritage, accepted standards of behaviour, customs, traditions, language and stories (Smircich, 1983, p. 339).

Lynn Meek describes culture as “the collective will of the organisation” and proposes that it cannot be readily manipulated or ruined by management (1994, p. 269).

The culture of an organisation drives the way employees think, act and feel. It influences not only their own actions but also the actions of others (Helms & Stern, 2001, p. 417). Organisational culture is considered to be the shared beliefs and expectations (Schwartz & Davis, 1981, p. 33), together with shared assumptions. Pettigrew argues it is an accepted standard of meanings for a given group at a set time (1979, p. 574). The most apt definition which I intend to adopt throughout this work is that of Manning: “accepted practices, rules and principles of conduct that are situationally applied and generalised rationales and beliefs” (1989, p. 360). This definition has been chosen as it is written about police culture specifically therefore it is particularly relevant to this research. It encapsulates the fundamental principles of many other definitions. It includes the main characteristics, which subsequently determine how people think, feel and behave.

The underlying theme in all definitions of organisational culture is that of accepted practices acquired through ‘generational inheritance’, one generation teaches the next, passing on their standards, beliefs and expectations to the next generation. Working practices and basic assumptions which have been proven to work historically are passed on via human interaction: therefore the processes and practices are inherited by the next generation which then become the organisation’s own distinctive character (B. Berg, 1999, p. 312; Martins & Terblanche, 2003, p. 65; Schein, 1984, p. 3).

Culture is more than just a ‘social pattern’: it extends beyond the visible outward signs. True culture is often deep rooted within informal behaviour

patterns, often with hidden meanings (Schein, 1984, p. 3). Therefore it is vital to look much deeper, in order to uncover the true culture which is often hidden at the very core of an organisation (Waddington, 1999a, p. 297). These deep-rooted values define the organisational goals and the standards of behaviour that are accepted in order to achieve these goals. The culture of the organisation or department defines the shared rules. The true culture of the organisation is evidenced in the way things are actually done, the basic values and commonly held beliefs, both conscious and unconscious (Coffey, 1991, p. 12; J Foster, 2003, p. 198). Manning suggests these practices are general guidelines which are individually applied to a variety of situations (1989, p. 360). Organisations do not necessarily have a monolithic culture they may have a variety of cultures and also numerous sub cultures, all of which have an impact on both the individual and the organisation (Waddington, 1999a, p. 290).

As children we observe and discover patterns of behaviour and cultures, learning to associate words and objects in order to make sense of the world around us. We become culturally conditioned by our experiences. This is also true of adults particularly within the working environment (Hofstede, 1980, p. 50; Schein, 2004, p. 189). Personal life experiences have a direct impact on our perceptions of the working environment thus, in turn, influence the organisational culture (Helms & Stern, 2001, p. 426). It is through observations of daily discussions, conversations and negotiations between colleagues, which help to develop our values and define the accepted standards of behaviour (Seel, 2000). These shared assumptions are maintained through human interaction consistently reinforced with behaviours and attitudes. The learned behaviours become the accepted norm, proven processes that then develop into standard practice. Geertz suggests it is the interpretation of our experiences which consequently guides our future actions (1973, p. 145). Whilst Hofstede argues that it is the 'collective mental programming' which is acquired through shared experiences leading to

common values, beliefs and in turn a 'common culture' (1980, p. 43), a view supported by Smirich (1983, p. 339).

Wallach (1983, p. 28) formulated an Organisational Culture Index (OCI) based on the 'operationalisation of culture' in which he identified three main dimensions of culture, bureaucratic, innovative, and supportive. He describes bureaucratic culture as that which evolves around power and control, characterised by a distinctive set of values: "power-oriented, cautious, established, solid, regulated, ordered, structured, procedural and hierarchical" (Wallach, 1983, p. 32). Innovative cultures are produced in a stimulating, challenging, creative environment with an established element of risk taking, there is a clear acceptance of experimentation (Wallach, 1983, p. 33). The final category is that of 'supportive cultures' which concentrate on relationships and human values "trusting, safe, equitable, sociable, encouraging, relationship-oriented and collaborative" (Wallach, 1983, p. 34). This typology provides a clear structure for differentiating between the various cultures, which may be present within an organisation.

It is important to consider the significance of organisational culture. There is evidence which suggests culture has a direct impact on performance (Alvesson, 2002, p. 1; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 1997, p. 9), and employee commitment (Lok, Westwood, & Crawford, 2005, p. 493). Culture is said to be linked to effectiveness, thereby suggesting an 'ineffective organisation can become effective' (Lynn Meek, 1994, p. 265). Morgan identifies the main strengths of organisational culture as 'people, goals and behaviour' (Morgan, 1997, p. 149). Cultures that concentrate on people help to develop a learning environment by encouraging reflection. This enables everyone to develop from his or her own experience, even the most mundane aspects. Positive shared goals are important as they encourage people to work together to achieve the desired outcomes, however they can become negative. Finally it is important that people should recognise and

acknowledge the impact of their own behaviour on the organisation's culture, this is particularly vital for managers.

The formal culture is reflected in policies and procedures, within which we can identify the basic assumptions and characteristics of the organisation. The standard set by the senior leadership team has a major role to play in setting the standards for the organisation, consequently this has an impact on the behaviour trends for all employees (Swope, 2001, p. 5). Leaders' help to formulate culture and subcultures by outlining and maintaining their expected values and behaviour patterns thus giving employees direction and coherence (Lok, et al., 2005, p. 492). Schein argues that leadership and culture are inextricably linked: they are in fact 'two sides of the same coin' (1992, p. 15). These standards are also aligned to working practices that the management choose to invoke in order to recognise, reward, endorse, ignore or censure behaviour. Their own behaviour may be copied by others wishing to emulate their success therefore they need to recognise their own personal strengths and weaknesses to ensure their behaviour is beyond reproach.

The culture of an organisation may be demonstrated in a number of ways, including customs and rituals, values both stated and unstated, visible symbolic gestures, accepted standards of behaviour, historical stories, and 'shop-talk' utilising specific language typical to the group (Cameron & Quinn, 2005, p. 10; Waddington, 1999a, p. 291). People are not necessarily aware of their organisational or departmental culture, it often remains covert, therefore more difficult to identify. A set of unwritten rules which are often difficult to challenge (Skolnick, 2008, p. 35). Due to the clandestine nature of some cultures it may require a new experience or confrontation from an 'outsider' to identify the existing culture, alternatively it may become more apparent when it is published in a model or identified framework (Cameron & Quinn, 2005, p. 10). However some aspects of organisational culture are

more tangible, therefore observable by both the employees themselves and outsiders. Mission statements, dress codes, symbols, rituals and routines, the working environment, how people interact and treat one another are all characteristics of human behaviour, which have an impact on the individuals' assumptions. It is these personal and shared beliefs that have a direct bearing on the culture of the organisation.

Organisations that are divided into various departments or units may also have different cultures or subcultures as a direct result of the shared understandings and experiences of these sections (Loftus, 2009a, p. 85). These individuals will develop their own ideas and values therefore their own culture, which may have an impact on group identity and overall performance. Subcultures may develop within cultures and therefore have strong recognisable elements of the main culture within them. Core values and behaviours will be present however there will also be elements which are quite distinctive and unique to that particular subculture (Lok, et al., 2005, p. 495). Trice and Morand suggest subcultures can be distinctly different from the common culture within an organisation, either intensifying or opposing them (1991, p. 1).

Lok et al argue that subcultures have a greater influence over employees attitudes towards the organisation than the main culture itself (2005, p. 495). They also discovered that innovative and supportive subcultures created a positive, more constructive attitude towards the organisation thus employees were more committed. In contrast a bureaucratic environment created a negative attitude towards commitment. The leadership style of managers will have a direct influence on the values and subcultures of the organisation therefore a 'consideration style' of management is believed to engender positive attitudes and behaviours which ultimately lead to greater commitment and dedication.

The many facets of organisational culture have been discussed in detail however it is important to remember that cultures do change within organisations (Lynn Meek, 1994, p. 272). The requirement to change the culture within an organisation generally arises when there is a need to solve an identified problem (Schein, 2004, p. 365). Change is driven by both internal and external influences which are affected by a number of factors, including individual interests and current trends (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008, p. 33). It is not always necessary to change the entire culture, in fact the stronger elements of a culture may even assist with the implementation of changes required to resolve the issues. Careful planning and management support are key elements to a successful change programme. It is suggested that when the management of an organisation fully immerse themselves in the change programme, communicating clear messages to employees with regards to the necessity of the changes and also focus on particularly difficult areas, the programme is more likely to succeed (Schein, 2004, p. 389). Alvesson and Sveningsson suggest “cynicism is not an uncommon reaction to change” (2008, p. 33). The variable social interactions and the shared experiences of individuals influence the overall cultures therefore there may be resistance to organisational change (Scott, Mannion, Davies, & Marshall, 2003, p. 117).

In considering organisational culture it is an acquired understanding gleaned via a vast array of lived experiences, which influence an individual’s actions and also the actions of those around them. The culture becomes the general rules, which govern the way employees think, act and feel. There may be a variety of sub-cultures present within an organisation. It is important to recognise the qualities of the culture as they can have a significant impact on employee commitment and performance.

Group Membership

An organisation is constructed of multiple groups which, according to Hogg and Terry, are distinguished by their individual “power, status and prestige” (2001, p. 1). For many people their bond to their professional group may prove more significant and hold more importance to them than their own personal identity. Group membership can assist individuals form their social identity. By giving them a sense of belonging this clearly defines who they are (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, p. 259), providing ‘defining characteristics’ by which they are able to identify who they are (Hogg & Terry, 2001, p. 3).

Henri Tajfel developed social identity theory, which relates to intergroup relations and group behaviours (1972a, p. 307). This identity gives people a sense of belonging to a group but also permits them to act as individuals as well. Tajfel defined social identity theory as “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (1972b, p. 292). Hogg and Terry suggest there are two distinct stages involved in the development of social identity, categorisation and self-enhancement (2001, p. 4). Categorisation creates the “in-group behavioural norms, whilst self-enhancement guides the process thus developing a strong common identity” (Ellemers, 2001, p. 103). These personal characteristics help to define the individual but are closely related to their desire to belong to a particular group, “this sense of belonging is psychological, it is phenomenologically real” (Hogg & Abrams, 1998, p. 7).

Social identity theory indicates that individuals seek identification with prominent, high-status groups there is also an element of competition with other groups. Competition between two groups can be healthy: it may be encouraged in order to promote group cohesiveness, improve both inter-

group morale and cooperation. However it also has the capacity to promote negative competitiveness resulting in a greater divide between groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 33). Within the individual's mind they create categories of accepted behavioural 'norms' that they associate with their group. These behavioural 'norms' clearly specify how an individual ought to think, feel and behave (Glomseth & Gottschalk, 2009, p. 4). They adopt certain attitudes and develop shared understandings thus creating their 'identity' which subsequently becomes part of their culture (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 34). Individuals have a strong desire to belong to a positively different or distinct group, one which enhances their self esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). Consequently strong in-group distinctions are created which can lead to divisions with those people who do not demonstrate the same characteristics thus creating out-groups. This distinction can have a negative effect, leading to stereotyping and ultimately discrimination. In a study conducted by Gerber high-status was associated with male domination, those groups which had a higher proportion of males were considered superior in status (2001, p. 141). She also discovered that status had an impact on the ability of the individual to express their opinions or suggestions, those with a higher status were more able to express their views.

Groups can have a positive impact by providing social support, friendship and a sense of belonging for an individual. However there can be tremendous pressure from the group to adapt their attitudes in order to become accepted (McIvor, 2009, p. 3; Roth, 1992, p. 694). Conformity involves adopting the behaviours of those around you, either voluntarily or involuntarily, in order to 'fit-in'. (Howitt, et al., 1989, p. 37). This is an intra-group phenomenon which relates to social rather than individual identity, suggesting human behaviour is not simply a question of biology (Hogg & Abrams, 1998, p. 160). Elfenbein and O'Reilly considered the individual compatibility of a person to a group or organisation: they suggested that 'person culture fit' is directly linked to organisational values (2007, p. 112). Whereas Sarris and Kirby conclude that there is a direct correlation between person culture fit, job satisfaction and

group cohesion (2005, p. 161). The closer the similarity between the individual's personal values and the organisational values, the easier it will be for the individual to fit into the group. This compatibility also assists with retention of staff (Adkins & Caldwell, 2004, p. 969). Ellemers concludes "the extent to which individual's feel committed to their group is an important predictor of their willingness to exert themselves in order to achieve their common group goals" (2001, p. 114).

Group membership is important as it gives people a sense of belonging; it establishes common behaviours and a social identity. This enables the individual to appreciate their personal characteristics thus defining who they are. Individuals seek membership with groups that help to develop their self-esteem, status and prestige. For some individuals their membership to a particular group is more important than their personal identity. The group environment provides friendship and support. There is often competition with other groups and pressure to conform to the normative behaviours within the group.

Occupational Choice

Men and women tend to concentrate on very different occupations. They appear to value different aspects of work and therefore make very different career choices (Rosenbloom, Ash, Dupont, & Coder, 2008, p. 553). Abbott discusses the gender divisions within society and suggests they start at birth. She argues that society creates the basic distinctions between men and women, stipulating what is acceptable behaviour for each gender. Behavioural norms for boys and men include domination, aggression, they are expected to be noisy and active, whereas women are expected to be caring, quiet and less assertive" (Abbott, 2000, p. 56). She concludes that these behavioural norms are the very characteristics, which define people in

terms of their employment. It is suggested that employers have a clear view of what is appropriate, acceptable work for a woman and women generally share this view. Abbott identified 100% of apprenticeship opportunities within the motor industry, construction and electrical installation were given to young men: whilst women continue to dominate in areas of hairdressing and secretarial work (2000, p. 69). Abbott concluded that “the choices women make and their orientation to both are the outcome of constructed choices and the socially constructed expectations of women’s role and women’s responsibilities”.

Policing remains a male dominated occupation, with, on average, 25% female representation and certain specialist departments being significantly lower in the number of female officers. However policing is not the only occupation in which women remain in the minority. Women are significantly under-represented in science, engineering and information technology (Rosenbloom, et al., 2008, p. 543). There are also discrepancies within medicine; women in Britain who decide on a career in medicine are more likely to remain in general practice. Should they choose to specialise they typically opt for paediatrics and psychiatry rather than surgery (Ferrier & Woodward, 1982, p. 1411; Lambert, Goldacre, Edwards, & Parkhouse, 1996, p. 23; Redman, Saltman, Straton, Young, & Paul, 1994, p. 362). This gender division within medicine appears to be based on the working hours available and the need to prioritise family commitments (Crompton, 2003, p. 43). Students base their career choices on their ‘self belief, personal abilities and also the value of different careers’, based on their beliefs which have been formulated through socialisation and past experiences (T. P. Dick & Rallis, 1991, p. 283). Parents, teachers and friends all have a significant impact on the formulation of values and beliefs, which subsequently influence career choice.

Police culture

Definitions

In the first part of this chapter I have considered organisational culture in general terms. It is now my intention to focus more specifically on police culture and finally women within the police. An appreciation of police culture is critical to understanding the way officers think, act and behave. According to the descriptors of organisational culture, a culture which is supportive and encouraging will be more productive (Alvesson, 2002, p. 1; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 1997, p. 9). Strong cultures can hinder organisational change therefore it is vitally important to attempt to gain a clear comprehension. An examination of the cultural dynamics within the firearms unit will assist our understanding of the under-representation of female officers and also the external perceptions of the department, which suggest it is elitist (Andronicou, 2007). Research suggests police culture is fragmented and not a single phenomenon (J Foster, 2003, p. 196; Paoline, 2003, p. 25). According to Chan police culture is "the set of assumptions, values, modes of thinking, and acting, that a group of police officers developed as part of their shared understanding" (2007, p. 148). Waddington and Wright support the view that police culture is based upon values and beliefs, working practices which help to explain and justify officer's actions (2010, p. 68). There are many similarities to Manning's definition of organisational culture, the accepted rules, beliefs and principles of conduct which amount to their assumptions, values and modes of thinking (1989, p. 360). These accepted working practices emerge from the fundamentals of policing itself (Waddington, 1999a, p. 297). These procedures are then applied to situations and subsequently become the norm for police officers working within a 'rigid hierarchical structure', again similar to organisational culture (Chan, 1997, p. 43; Manning, 1997, p. 360). It is these shared understandings which provide coping mechanisms for officers to adjust to the pressure and stress of their role (Reiner, 1992b, p. 109).

There is overwhelming evidence that indicates that the concept of culture within the police organisation is clearly similar in definition to that of any other organisation. However it is the depth of those beliefs and values, which requires further exploration.

How Culture develops

Police work is unique with officers being in a position of authority and control. They have legal powers to take away an individual's liberty and also autonomy to use their discretion. Police officers are responsible for taking control of situations and making appropriate decisions based on information they obtain. For example three officers may be directed to deal with a group of twenty people fighting, they will not be able to arrest all twenty but may make a decision to arrest three or four based on their perceptions, 'gut-instinct' and stereotypes. Uniquely within the police organisation, discretion is higher the further down the hierarchy (Wilson, 1968, p. 7). There are very few jobs where the balance of the access to power is more readily available at the lower end of the organisational structure. Research by Walklate concluded that there was a strong correlation between police culture and discretion (1995, p. 104). The nature of police work, the duties performed and the tough decisions which have to be made by officers on a daily basis all contribute to the culture of the police organisation (Newburn, 2005, p. 258).

Officers themselves generally view their primary role as 'crime fighters' (Cain, 1973, p. 72; Ericson & Hegarty, 1997, p. 299; Fielding, 1988, p. 205; Holdaway & Parker, 1998, p. 44; L. Jackson, 2003, p. 624; Loftus, 2009b, p. 5; Paoline, Myers, & Worden, 2000, p. 578; Waddington, 1999a, p. 299). Their vision of an ideal day would involve dealing with the higher echelon of criminal, for example drug dealers and burglars. They also enjoy the opportunity of driving at high speed, either in pursuits or in response to jobs, sometimes even to routine calls which do not necessary require them to drive at such speed (Loftus, 2009b, p. 8). There was also evidence within Loftus'

study that officers were keen to be involved in public disorder (2009a, p. 97). They are frequently required to take control of a variety of situations in an authoritative manner in order to achieve a positive outcome but in doing so they also retain superiority over the public (Loftus, 2009b, p. 10; Paoline, et al., 2000, p. 578).

Morris and Heal argue that the provision of help and assistance to the public is a more accurate description of their primary function and suggest that police offer only a minor disruption to crime levels (Loader, 1997, p. 1; 1981, p. 55). Early research discovered that much of police work is actually routine, with officers predominantly taking the role of peace makers rather than law enforcers (Banton, 1964, p. 127; Morris & Heal, 1981, pp. 9-13), a finding which was later supported by Holdaway (1995, p. 111). Paperwork, processing information and exchanging knowledge are also key elements to the role of a police officer (Sheptycki, 1998, p. 59).

In 1993 a Home Office survey was conducted due to concerns regarding the rising levels of bureaucracy within the police organisation. The findings were surprising, suggesting that only 3% of police officers' time was committed to paperwork relating to the prosecution of offenders (Cresswell, Howarth, Dolan, & Hedges, 1993, p. vi), although this figure increased to 12% for those officers directly involved in specialist crime departments. Subsequently a nationalised standard was introduced in the UK regarding the preparation and content of court files, a system designed to reduce time spent on paperwork. Despite these changes, officers still complain the volume of paperwork hinders their role as crime fighters. Paperwork is often regarded by male officers as 'women's work' suggesting female support staff would be capable of completing it on their behalf (Loftus, 2009a, p. 99). Loftus identified in her study that new recruits were quickly encouraged to adopt similar negative attitudes towards the completion of paperwork thereby adapting to the culture (2009a, p. 100).

There appears to be a discrepancy between the actual duties performed and the officer's 'romantic notions' of their role (Morash & Greene, 1986, p. 248). This is frequently portrayed within the culture by the use of storytelling, recounting experiences to colleagues in an often, exaggerated manner, the focus being on the more dangerous encounters. Experiences become their source of knowledge, officers recount events to justify their actions but are often unable to articulate accurate procedures or legislation (Shearing & Ericson, 1991, p. 488).

The police organisation has a hierarchical rank structure however the balance of power in terms of the general public clearly rests at the lower end of the hierarchy. Police work is unique; officers are empowered to use their discretion and coercive authority on a daily basis. They generally see themselves as crime fighters, apprehending drug dealers and burglars. Whilst in reality their role is far more routine, providing assistance and reassurance to the public is a more apt description of their day to day activities. This disparity between their portrayed role and the actual role is contributing towards their organisational culture.

Characteristics of police culture

An examination of previous research indicates that police officers' values and their attitudes towards their job are influenced by their working environment: the dangers, uncertainty, and also the coercive authority which they hold (Paoline, 2003, p. 201; Paoline, et al., 2000, p. 576). Historically this is shown to result in social isolation, alienation from society and group loyalty (B. Berg, 1999, p. 313; Chan, 1997, p. 44, 2007, p. 147; Goldsmith, 1990, p. 93; Lennings, 1997, p. 562; S. Martin, 1996, p. 2; Paoline, 2003, p. 199). Berg suggests there is a "police personality, a combination of characteristics and behaviours that have come to be commonly used to stereotype police officers", (1999, p. 297). This psychological interpretation of culture implies

that officers come into the profession with certain predetermined psychological traits that are suited to the role. These include assertiveness, solidarity, cynicism, control of situations and a propensity to be physically aggressive and violent (Rabe-Hemp, 2008, p. 264).

According to Skolnick police culture varies from place to place and has changed over time however it retains certain 'universal and lasting features' (2008, p. 39). Reiner identified five main elements of 'cop culture': Mission-action-cynicism-pessimism, suspicion, isolation/solidarity, conservatism and machismo (Reiner, 2002, p. 276). Sexism is also a key characteristic of police culture however this will be discussed in the next chapter. Of all the main features of police culture and perhaps one of the most important elements, is a sense of mission (Chan, 1997, p. 43), 'its not just a job but a way of life' (Reiner, 2010, p. 119), a vocation or calling (Loftus, 2009b, p. 4). This concept is also reflected in their sense of themselves as 'the thin blue line' performing an essential role in safeguarding social order (Reiner, 2002, p. 277). According to Wakefield this element is not present in the private sector (2008, p. 668).

Suspicion is a fundamental element, a 'healthy attitude or sixth sense' that can assist officers with the prevention and detection of crime (Loftus, 2009b, p. 14; Paoline, et al., 2000, p. 578; Reiner, 2010, p. 121; Skolnick, 1996, p. 45). Police officers are taught to be suspicious during their initial training, this is part of their socialisation into the organisation (J Foster, 2003, p. 206; Reiner, 2002, p. 276). They develop a sense of suspicion that is constant and cannot be 'switched off'. Suspicion affords officers the opportunity to avoid potential danger. They are constantly looking for potential trouble, signs of danger, by 'reading' a situation they are able to maintain their advantage. However constant suspicion is likely to lead to stereotyping which can have a negative impact, the Brixton riots of 1981 being one such example which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Police officers are empowered to use their discretion to resolve a variety of situations (Rowe, 2008, p. 98; Scarman, 1982, p. 103; Waddington, 1999a, p. 287). Police officers are predominantly unsupervised whilst on patrol nonetheless they remain accountable for their actions (Barton, 2003, p. 355; Henry, 2007, p. 192). Research by Loftus suggests that police discretion is often influenced by the 'attitude test'. Officers expect the public to be co-operative and polite, alarmingly those who fail this test may find themselves arrested although it would appear that the overriding aim is simply to demonstrate their power and authority (2009b, p. 11). Rowe suggests that the majority of officers on patrol are younger in service with little experience of dealing with the public (2008, p. 99). In 2003 a BBC television documentary 'The Secret Policeman' highlighted concerns regarding police discretion, by exposing evidence of racism and racist attitudes in new recruits (Rowe, 2008, p. 100). Racism is a vast area to explore and will not be included in this research.

Officers have a clear understanding of professional integrity, however research suggests that they place a higher value on their loyalty towards colleagues rather than their own honesty (O'Malley, 1997, p. 21). Furthermore recent research indicates that certain behaviours are unacceptable: those, which amount to 'acquisitive crime', such as the taking of money or property, would be reported. However officers would be less likely to report the use of excessive force or 'bending the rules' to protect a colleague (Westmarland, 2005, p. 162). Promotion can have a positive impact on integrity: research by Rothwell and Baldwin confirms that police supervisory status had a positive association with reporting wrong doing and that the police are in fact, more likely, than civilian public employees, to 'blow the whistle' on colleagues (Rothwell & Baldwin, 2007, p. 357).

Group loyalty is thought to be a major factor within modern police culture (Paoline, et al., 2000, p. 580). Police recruits are encouraged to move away from individualism and autonomy, towards 'solidarity', with immense pressure

to conform and become part of the group (Fielding, 1988, p. 189). Newly recruited officers are quick to learn that group acceptance is more important than their personal/individual needs (J Foster, 2003, p. 203). Acceptance is a basic human characteristic, an overwhelming need for people to feel a sense of belonging (Maslow, 1943, p. 9). Student officers are required to demonstrate their competency to perform their duties as a police officer. Historically this also incorporated their attitudes and beliefs towards minority ethnic groups, including colleagues (Holdaway, 1997, p. 393). Holdaway and Barron suggest that minority ethnic officers themselves discriminate against black and ethnic minority people in an attempt to be accepted by their white colleagues (1997, p. 144). Those officers who attempt to challenge inappropriate remarks or behaviour are frequently excluded and find it more difficult to become part of the group (Holdaway, 1997, p. 395). However the group itself may demonstrate their solidarity towards one another by providing support to colleagues faced with discrimination from the public (Holdaway & Barron, 1997, p. 136), a finding which was not substantiated by Loftus (2007, p. 120).

Strong bonds and friendships are formed with members of their own group, officers often regard the police as their 'family' (Loftus, 2009a, p. 119). Acceptance by the group ensures confidence that their colleagues will provide assistance should their safety be threatened (J Foster, 2003, p. 203). Group cohesion provides support from both internal and external pressures of police work (Burke, 1993, p. 9). Research by Chan suggests the modern day police culture has changed, while a support mechanism remains, the intense camaraderie has diminished as officers become more self protective and aware of 'doing the right thing' (2007, p. 144). However Paoline et al would argue that 'group loyalty' remains prevalent (2000, p. 580), a view supported by Loftus who identified this as an integral feature of the culture (2009b, p. 14). Additionally she identified competitiveness between shifts, which re-enforced the group loyalty. Group cohesiveness is particularly important for firearms officers who rely on one another operationally: in fact their life depends on the actions of their colleagues. This is an area which is

particularly important to this research as previously strong team bonding was highlighted as a significant factor within the firearms culture raising concerns of isolation from the organisation (Gibling & Hirst, 2007, p. 17).

Fletcher discovered a wealth of oral history in her research, officers utilising storytelling as an opening to relieve tension, educate colleagues and an opportunity to maintain group cohesiveness (1996, p. 38). The stories are often exaggerated 'war stories' about 'real policing' that appear to 'glorify violence'. However the officers are merely celebrating what they perceive as the 'real job', as is often the case in many other professions (Van Maanen, 1973, p. 70; Waddington, 1999a, p. 297). The education of colleagues through 'storytelling' is an integral part of the generational inheritance described by a number of researchers as a vital element of police culture (Loftus, 2009a, p. 196; Schein, 1984, p. 3; Shearing & Ericson, 1991, p. 491). The jokes and stories repeatedly told by officers are both entertaining and enlightening, sustaining the organisational traditions through individual experiences (Holdaway, 1983, p. 138). The humour is said to be an opportunity to release stress and deal with the tensions of everyday policing (Holdaway, 1983, p. 142). Women often join in with this banter, perhaps acquiescing in order to become 'one of the boys' (C. Martin, 1996, p. 254). The women in Martin's study did not feel threatened by the banter however they did accept there were negative connotations associated with the macho sexist style and expressed concerns that it may result in the segregation of female officers (1996, p. 526).

A strong team culture ensures officers work together, share information and solve crime (Glomseth, Gottschalk, & Solli-Sæther, 2007, p. 105). Police culture provides coping mechanisms for officers faced with difficult and often stressful situations (Beehr, Johnson, & Nieva, 1995, p. 11; M. Brown, 1988, p. 9; Chan, 2007, p. 147; Paoline, 2003, p. 202; Paoline, et al., 2000, p. 580; Van Maanen, 1974, p. 85). One such mechanism is police humour, behind

the scenes jokes are used as a valuable tool for releasing tension, (Moran & Massam, 1997, p. 4; Waddington, 1999a, p. 295). This 'canteen culture' is described in detail by Waddington who suggests the conversations which are undertaken within the confines of the canteen are not repeated externally therefore do not have any impact on the professionalism of the officers. Jokes and banter provide an opportunity to deal with stress, release tension and also gives officers a chance to reflect (Waddington, 1999a, p. 287). A view supported by Loftus, she observed a 'dark humour', with officers regularly telling jokes or making humorous remarks on their way to jobs (2009a, p. 112). She also observed officers were keen to play practical jokes on one another. A positive consequence of this culture is the engendered team spirit (C. Martin, 1996, p. 523).

Practical jokes were often used as part of the initiation of new recruits. They were often asked to perform 'tasks' whilst the remainder of the team would observe. An example given by Holdaway is that of the officer who was asked to check all the belisha beacons in a particular location to see if they were flashing in sequence, if not the officer had to record the numbers of those lamps believed to be irregular (1983, p. 140). This is just one example of an initiation ceremony officers were expected to participate in to become an accepted member of the team.

Physical strength has always been portrayed as a dominant characteristic necessary for effective policing (Carrier, 1988, p. 6; Remington, 1983, p. 131). Whilst the occupation remains predominantly male, physical strength lingers high on the agenda. Some researchers suggest the use of force is an accepted, internalised, part of police culture (Reiner, 2000, p. 87; Skolnick, 2008, p. 38; Waddington, 1999a, p. 302; Westley, 1953, p. 34). More recent research suggests it is the younger male officers who are more likely to use excessive force when effecting an arrest (Brandl, Strohshine, & Frank, 2001, p.

527). However Terrill, Paoline and Manning identified a definitive link between traditional culture and coercion (2003, p. 103).

Loftus identified that police work is often quite monotonous, even boring, with officer's receiving little or no recognition for their efforts (2009b, p. 8). As a consequence, she observed, the police officers involved in her study developed a cynical view of the world. She experienced a variety of circumstances where officers approached a situation with a pessimistic attitude. Officers were distrustful and sceptical of the public (Anshel, 2000, p. 377), often making jokes or mocking situations whilst on route to or from an incident. Police work has been described as having extensive quiet periods, with officers simply walking around waiting for something to happen, looking for somewhere to have a cup of tea and talk to like minded people (Holdaway, 1983, p. 20; Morris & Heal, 1981, pp. 9-28).

As discussed, previous research suggests that police work is not as action packed as many officers claim (Banton, 1964, p. 127; Holdaway, 1995, p. 111; Loftus, 2009b, p. 8). However there remains elements of stress, danger and vulnerability encountered by police officers in their day to day duties which encourages group solidarity and a 'code of silence' for self protection (Goldsmith, 1990, pp. 93-94; Loftus, 2009a, p. 117; McIvor, 2009, p. 4). The 'police code of silence' is a strong characteristic of police culture whereby officers are reluctant to disclose negative information about situations or colleagues. This is also present in other organisations but is far more extreme within the police (Chan, 1997, p. 44; Chin & Wells, 1997, p. 237; Ivkovic & O'Connor Shelley, 2008, p. 445; Kleinig, 1996, p. 69; Koepke, 1999, p. 214; Muehlheusser & Roeder, 2008, p. 387; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993, p. 112).

The code of silence most frequently occurs where there is a need to justify officer's actions, in particular the use of excessive force. An example of this

can be found in recent research by Loftus: she describes an arrest where excessive force has been used and a member of the public has asked the remaining officers for the arresting officers name, they lied by saying they did not know the officer, when he was in fact a colleague from their own shift (2009b, p. 13). Her findings suggest that the extent of the lies were generally regarded as 'small scale', perceived to do little harm. There were occasions when the small-scale lies were deemed beneficial to the public, for instance maintaining the confidentiality of a source of information for their own protection.

According to the findings of the Mollen Commission, the code of silence remains, "the vast majority of honest police officers still protect the minority of corrupt officers" (1994, p. 51). However it has been suggested that the code of silence even extends to giving false evidence on oath in order to support a colleague, such is the fear of retribution for defying the code (Benoit & Dubra, 2004, p. 787; Chin & Wells, 1997, p. 241). This retribution includes social shunning, lack of back up in dangerous situations, being ostracised, disciplinary action either against their colleague or themselves, and finally a lack of appropriate action by supervisors and also the organisation itself (Benoit & Dubra, 2004, p. 788; Trautman, 2000). The code of silence assists with reducing the fear of punishment, thus increasing the temptation to operate outside the law by 'exaggerating the need for and the benefits derived from, mutual loyalty and support' (Ewin, 1990, p. 6).

Reiner outlines alcoholism and sexual indulgences as key components of police culture and concludes this 'macho ethos' is a direct result of the dangers police officers face in their general duties and the coping strategies utilised to overcome the pressures (Reiner, 2000, p. 97, 2010, p. 128). Loftus identified "powerful undercurrents of masculinity encourage an aura of toughness and celebration of violence" (2009a, p. 96). Although her research confirmed the actual instances of violence were rare, officers were

keen to recall 'war stories' to demonstrate their masculinity. Research suggests that this machismo mentality within police culture stems from the origins of law and order. Laws created and enforced by white heterosexual men to protect their property, which included women (Jordan, 2004, p. 243). This macho ethos prohibits the expression of emotions which may be perceived as a sign of weakness, leading to concerns of unreliability and incompetence (Lennings, 1997, p. 560). These gendered qualities have implications for minorities within the group and can lead to discrimination. Fielding maintains that police culture is dominated by masculine values and identifies certain key characteristics: aggression, competitiveness, exaggerated heterosexual orientations and also the presence of distinct, rigid in group/out group characteristics which result in exclusionary behaviour towards the out groups (Fielding, 1994, p. 47).

Police culture develops through the working environment, daily interactions and the unique nature of the role. The many characteristics of police culture include mission-action-cynicism-pessimism, suspicion, isolation/solidarity, conservatism and machismo. One of the most unique features of police culture is the sense of mission, the fact that officers see their role not only as a life long career but also as a complete way of life; an element that appears to be lacking in the private sector. Stories, jokes and banter are recognised facets of police culture however this 'canteen talk' does not actually reflect the public actions of police officers. Despite the fact that police work is not all action packed, adrenaline filled excitement there remains an unknown element of danger and stress. Police culture provides coping mechanisms for dealing with these aspects of the role.

How police culture manifests itself

There has been an increase in the levels of interest directed towards police culture due to the perception that it may be an obstacle to the success of police reform (Chan, 1996, p. 110; Dean, 1995, p. 345; Fitzgerald, 1989, p. 200; Greene, 2000, p. 302; Reiner, 2010, p. 120). This study will examine the cultural dynamics of a specialist police department with a particular focus on gender. The research questions will consider the under-representation of women, the motivations for joining and also assist with gaining an understanding of the working environment of firearms officers. Barton suggests the implementation of new laws, increased civilianisation, and the introduction of performance indicators has done little to change the overall culture as senior managers fail to understand the strength of police culture (2003, p. 355). Crank stresses the importance of police culture:

“Until advocates of police change recognise the importance of culture, they will continue to be as surprised as they have been for the past 100 years at the profound limitations of reform efforts to yield real and enduring changes” (Crank, 1998, p. 357).

Excessive force has been seen as a catalyst in a number of large-scale disturbances. In April 1981 violence broke out on the streets of London, for three days there was a temporary break down of law and order. A few hundred young people, mainly black, attacked the police with bricks, bottles, petrol bombs and iron bars. The subsequent inquiry report published by Lord Scarman suggested there was a small minority of officers within the lower ranks of the Metropolitan police who were racially prejudiced (1982, p. 105). These ‘rotten apples’ were officers with negative, prejudiced views, who stereotyped people (Rowe, 2008, p. 103), consequently they demonstrated their racist attitudes in their actions towards young black people (Scarman, 1982, p. 105). However the Macpherson Report of the inquiry into the death of a black teenager Stephen Lawrence, in London in 1993 concluded that the

police were institutionally racist. The report suggested the organisation had failed to provide an appropriate service to a group of people due to their colour, culture or ethnic origin (Macpherson, 1999, p. 28). The earlier report by Scarman concluded there were a few 'rotten apples' within the lower ranks, whilst Macpherson highlighted concerns of institutional racism.

A more recent example of the police use of excessive force was that of Ian Tomlinson who died in the G20 protest in London in 2009. The media published video footage of Ian Tomlinson walking away from police officers with his hands in his pockets when he was struck on the back of the leg with a baton, before being shoved to the ground by a uniformed police officer. Following an inquest into his death, the jury recorded a verdict of unlawful killing. Consequently the officer involved has been charged with manslaughter and faces a criminal trial at Crown Court.

As a consequence of the G20 incident, the Metropolitan police attempted to regain public trust and confidence: two female officers were put in charge of the subsequent 'Climate Camp' protests which followed shortly after. A female superintendent Julia Pendry was silver commander and responsible for the day to day tactics relating to the policing of the camp and Chief Inspector Jane Connors was her deputy. Their presence was deemed by the media to be "a deliberate attempt to make the operation less focused on the 'macho' elements of policing which were apparent during the G20 protests" (Henley, 2009; Mann, 2009). Communication was considered to be the key to peacefully policing the protest. Numerous meetings were organised prior to the protest in order to develop a healthy dialogue which continued throughout the four day event (Metropolitan Police Service, 2009). The subsequent climate camp protest at the end of August 2009 was deemed a peaceful one; there was certainly no negative publicity.

Early research in America by Westley describes a hostile relationship between the police and the public, suggesting the public are the enemy of police officers (1953, p. 35). This is supported by the findings of the Mollen Commission, which discovered an “us v them” mentality in its investigation of the New York Police Department (Armacost, 2003, p. 501). The majority of public contact with the police is a request for help or service (Wakefield & Flemming, 2009, p. 17). Officers predominantly have contact with the ‘policed’ rather than the public they are protecting, consequently this may create an antagonistic relationship which subsequently results in isolation and alienation from the public (Loftus, 2009b, p. 12; Paoline, 2003, p. 199; Paoline, et al., 2000, p. 579; Westley, 1953, p. 35).

An enquiry in America considered the overall policing style and management: officers were monitored and measured on the number of incidents they attended and also the number of arrests made. The style of policing was found to be highly confrontational and unnecessarily aggressive, with control taking precedence over prevention. The enquiry also found evidence of a working environment which tolerated crude, violent, racist, sexist and homophobic language, suggesting violence and prejudice were acceptable behaviours in an organisation which supported a ‘hard-nosed style’ of policing (Armacost, 2003, p. 496). Managers were guilty of failing to monitor or record incidents accurately, resulting in a small minority of officers consistently utilising excessive force without any retribution thus contributing to the overall culture of the organisation.

Despite the more traditional male attitudes towards the use of force there are some occasions when the police are described as not having used sufficient force, for example the 1981 Brixton riots. Lord Scarman concluded that the true criticism of the police was ‘they failed to act in sufficient time or with sufficient force’ (Scarman, 1982, p. 119). The majority of media attention reflects the historical view of police using excessive force. This traditional

impression is perhaps less appropriate in modern day policing, with many police organisations recognising their priorities towards the public in providing a service rather than exercising control with the use of excessive force (Mawby & Wright, 2008, p. 225).

Police culture appears to manifest itself in negative relationships with the public. Early research suggested the public did not like the police they had very little respect for them and were even hostile towards them. Police have, on occasions, been criticised for utilising excessive force and also accused of racism resulting in large-scale disorder on the streets of Britain. Two major public enquiries considered the disorders; the Scarman report suggested the concerns lay with a minority of racist officers whilst the Macpherson findings indicated the police organisation was institutionally racist. The majority of public contact with the police is a result of a direct request for help, resulting in negative, hostile attitudes towards the police. In an attempt to alter the relationship between the public and the police, the police appear to have recognised the need to provide a more customer focused service delivery with the introduction of neighbourhood policing.

Cultural change

Clearly the concept of police culture is a complex one, often hindered by the lack of clarity regarding the perceived police function. Public perception of the police role is often very different to the reality of it (Cockcroft, 2007, p. 88). Open and transparent practices, which should lead to greater public awareness often result in negative rather than positive outcomes. This was apparent in Chan's review of a television documentary, 'Cop it Sweet'. Officers' were exposed as violent racists, whilst senior officers attempted to limit the damage, 'street cops' became even more embroiled in their culture (1997, p. 187). New Zealand Police wanted to improve the quality of their

policing by the introduction of a more proactive public service they introduced a change programme called, 'Policing 2000'. Unfortunately the concept was not aligned to the culture of the organisation therefore it failed. The vision and implementation strategies were not clearly communicated to front-line staff who subsequently rejected them (Duncan, Mouly, & Nilakant, 2001, p. 17).

The Scarman Report into the Brixton disorders in London in the 1980's concluded that the use of oppressive policing tactics had led to mutual suspicion and distrust. Stereotyping of young black people resulted in discrimination and ultimately public unrest (1982, p. 98). Internal reforms attempted to move away from the police being regarded as a 'force' and instigated moves to regain trust and confidence as a 'service', taking into consideration the needs of the community (Barton, 2003, p. 348).

Recent changes towards neighbourhood style policing have attempted to challenge public perceptions of the role by removing barriers and working in harmony with communities to provide a service which focuses on their needs (Tilley, 2003, p. 2). This style of policing introduced the concept of the public as 'customers', giving them the opportunity to voice their concerns regarding issues, not necessarily crime problems, but anything that may have an impact on their neighbourhood. This shift towards a community focused service delivery may impact on police culture by removing barriers and creating a more accessible police force, giving the public the opportunity to interact with officers thus, in time, creating greater trust and confidence. However research by Loftus discovered considerable resistance towards this concept, as officers failed to see how the public could ever be construed as their 'customers' (2009b, p. 6). Female officers were more receptive to a 'service orientated' approach however this was obscured by the preoccupation with crime fighting together with the persistent need to be in control of all situations (Lonsway, 2006, p. 42).

The gendered quality of police culture is characterised by male bonding, this trait is also present in other traditionally male dominated occupations, for example the military and also the fire service (J Foster, 2003, p. 197). It can be positive as it provides trusting relationships which are vital to ensure appropriate support in difficult situations (Gregory & Lees, 1999, p. 50). However male bonding can also lead to negative behaviour which can become exclusionary, even hostile towards those in the minority (Kier, 1999, p. 27).

Certain negative aspects of police culture need to change. Reiner believes the introduction of legislation has little impact on culture (1992b, p. 232). Chan suggests change is possible with a tightening of internal and external rules (1997, p. 51). Internal strategies designed to change the culture from the inside include more accountability (Brogden & Shearing, 1993, p. 97). Changes to the recruitment and training process may also prove productive (Chan, 1997, p. 131). However it is suggested that the organisation must be ready to accept the change and there should be clear direction from senior managers in order for it to be successful (Schein, 1985, p. 271).

The police service remains an organisation dominated by white heterosexual males, with females and black and minority ethnic people vastly under-represented. The issue of women will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter. Much of the earlier research talks about policemen, simply disregarding the female gender completely. There is very little research that relates specifically to policewomen working within specialist departments, particularly firearms (J. Brown & Sargent, 1995; Gibling & Hirst, 2007). Research by Brown and Sargent revealed that certain aspects of police culture inhibit women from becoming firearms officers rather than there being a personal lack of motivation to join (1995, p. 13). Personal motivations will be explored further as part of this research.

Previous research has identified a number of key characteristics within police culture. There are many similarities with regards to these characteristics particularly between the more recent works of Reiner, Chan and Loftus. However there are some discrepancies between Chan and Loftus with regards to the level of group loyalty, Chan suggests it has somewhat diminished whereas Loftus identifies it as a strong characteristic. The traditional view of police culture remains prominent with 'macho' attitudes being persistent within the culture of the police organisation (Loftus, 2009b, p. 17; Reiner, 2010, p. 128). This machismo element of police culture is particularly interesting and will be examined further in this research.

There has been a clear shift by the policing organisation towards considering the public as 'customers' with a community focused service delivery approach. This style of policing enables the public to identify their community issues, which require police involvement, increases communication and fosters good community relations. However there has been considerable resistance by police officers that are not yet ready to accept these dramatic changes to their role. The police service remains a macho, male dominated organisation. There is limited previous research available which considers the role of women within specialist policing departments.

Women in the police

The police organisation is male dominated with a hierarchal structure. Female officers provide an alternative approach to policing, often utilising their communication skills to resolve a situation rather than resorting to physical force. Consequently women are able to defuse potentially volatile situations without the need to exploit violence (Lonsway, et al., 2002, p. 3). Martin claims the presence of women officers and civilian support staff has had a significant impact on both the language and behaviour of male officers.

She also suggests that equalities legislation has paid a fundamental part in establishing a framework for women to succeed within the police (C. Martin, 1996, p. 526). However working practices and police cultures continue to have a negative impact on women, consequently female officers remain in the minority. The very nature of policing often leads to a hyper masculine environment, (Franklin, 2005, p. 2) creating a sub culture that is unattractive towards women. Earlier research by Adlam suggested part of this machismo culture was gambling, sexism and alcohol: one respondent claimed “beer, sport and women, preferably all at once”, were key characteristics of police culture (1981, p. 157).

In the 1990's there remained a continued non acceptance of women with much of the 'storytelling' taking place through socialisation at poker games and in bars (Fletcher, 1996, p. 38). Women were not invited to the after shift social activities therefore continued to struggle to find equality in this macho world. This will be explored further within this research by gaining an understanding of the working environment within a firearms department.

Research in the mid 1990's by Austin suggests that male hostility towards female officers continues in a blatant form. She describes in detail the types of behaviour to which women were constantly subjected, consequently demeaning their role (1996, p. 7). This view was supported by Young's earlier research, who suggests women remain subjected to “the vindictive malice of the men” (1991, p. 205). Conversely more recent research by Silvestri suggests this discrimination can no longer be observed in an open forum, it is more covert and therefore often difficult to detect. He raises concerns regarding this modern day discrimination faced by policewomen and argues that it is far more dangerous “unlike the policewomen who have gone before them, modern policewomen's discrimination is less blatant, less visible and as a result, more insidious” (Silvestri, 2003, p. 172).

There remains a continued mistrust and 'covert resentment' of women together with a lack of support, guidance or encouragement (Halford, 1987, p. 19). Women often find they are highly visible; they stand out from the crowd as there is nowhere to hide. They have to continually prove themselves in order to gain acceptance (Loftus, 2009a, p. 53). Martin suggests that there is a distinct difference in terms of acceptance regarding male and female officers. When male officers are appointed or promoted they very quickly gain credibility and acceptance from their colleagues however female officers are obliged to constantly prove themselves, in fact she suggests that this requirement never stops (Martin, 1982, p. 124).

Brown talks about the gendered assumptions of society, for example politicians and the media constantly talk about 'policemen', (2007a, p. 206; J Foster, 2003, p. 214). She suggests the "masculinised ethos underpinning policing has been sustained and that its adverse manifestations remain detrimental to women officers" (J. Brown, 2007a, p. 206). Messerschmidt also confirms the existence of an idealised version of masculinity and confirms "it is culturally honoured, glorified and extolled" (1993, p. 82). Loftus proposes a key feature of police culture is the harassment and exclusion of minority ethnic groups, this may be an indication of continued discrimination in this particular police area, however further research is required to discover if this is representative of the rest of the country (2008, p. 757). Furthermore it is the minority groups in particular females, who are not readily accepted into the 'traditional' police culture (Paoline, et al., 2000, p. 583). Women are often met with hostility, discrimination and harassment.

Rabe-Hemp considered the concept of identity with regards to female officers, suggesting that they generally either adopt a "*policewoman*" or "*policewoman*" identity: the emphasis being their conformity to either masculine or feminine police roles (2009, p. 114). Her findings indicate that women are actually discovering innovative, socially acceptable ways to retain their femininity

within a male dominated environment thereby achieving equilibrium within the role (Rabe-Hemp, 2009, p. 125).

Loftus suggests that women generally display the same characteristics as their male colleagues however some women also demonstrated a preference towards addressing the more routine problems and were also more receptive towards community policing (2009a, p. 191). Westmarland concluded that women were continuing to specialise in areas of child protection, whilst men preferred 'guns, cars and horses' (2001, p. 21). Child protection retains a lower status within the organisation (Laming, 2003, p. 334). The number of women joining the police has continued to rise; in the 1990's the number of female officers doubled from under 11,000 to over 20,000 (Heidensohn, 2005, p. 568).

A recent Home Office report suggests the police service have made considerable progress in the recruitment, representation and progression of women over the last ten years (Home Office, 2010a, p. 3). In 1995 Pauline Clare became Britain's first female Chief Constable. In 2011 the British Association for Women in Policing (BAWP) identified 77 female officers are currently members of ACPO. This number includes those women who, at this time, hold the rank of Assistant Chief Constable or above, and also police staff equivalent roles (British Association for Women in Policing (BAWP), 2011). Despite these positive advances women continue to face barriers with regards to promotion, particularly to the rank of Sergeant and remain under-represented in specialist roles such as firearms, traffic and special branch (Home Office, 2010a, p. 12).

The Australian experience of integrating women into the police service in large numbers demonstrates the need for comprehensive support mechanisms, as women were subjected to discrimination both directly and

indirectly (Prenzler & Wilmhurst, 1997, p. 88). Foster concludes that despite the growing number of women within the police, the organisation remains predominantly male with sexual discrimination firmly institutionalised within the police organisation (2003, p. 215).

The introduction of women into the police organisation has grown steadily over the past 100 years. Equalities legislation introduced in the mid 1980's established a framework to enable women to succeed in the police. Despite this legislation there remained a continued non-acceptance of women, with blatant sexism, harassment and discrimination. Research suggests that women continue to feel they have to work harder in order to be accepted (Dodge & Valcore, 2011, p. 708).

This chapter looked at organisational culture, whilst there are similarities between organisational cultures and police cultures there are some elements which are more intense or even unique to the police organisation (Prenzler, 1997, p. 52). Reiner acknowledges that police culture is not 'monolithic, universal nor unchanging' (1992b, p. 109). Interestingly Loftus concludes that the police role remains unique and unchanged, therefore the conventional view of police culture remains ever present in modern policing (Loftus, 2009b, p. 17). The organisational culture within the police plays a significant role in impeding the progress of women (P. Dick & Jankowicz, 2001, p. 181). This overview of culture will assist in the understanding of the cultural dynamics within the firearms unit of the chosen force and will help to formulate the direction of the research. The next chapter will consider the history and development of policing in the UK, including the introduction of policewomen.

Chapter two - Policing Organisation

In this chapter it is my intention to provide an introductory overview of the origins of the British Police Service in relation to women. This will be a very brief synopsis outlining the history of policing to set the research into context with regards to the integration of women. A timeline of events outlines the developments in policing and describes the formation of the British Police Service, the introduction of women during the First World War, their protective, caring and nurturing role. I then outline the changes, which resulted in the formation of the 43 forces of England and Wales, and the continued resistance towards policewomen. This chapter also looks at changes in legislation and the impact of the Sex Discrimination Act, and the continued integration of women.

The formation of the British Police

The derivation of the British Police lies in early tribal history: the Romans and the Anglo-Saxons brought the original ideas to England. Customs for securing order through the use of appointed representatives; in effect the people were the police. A police officers primary function is to maintain the Queens peace, further defined as the prevention of crime, protection of life and property and the preservation of public tranquillity. Key characteristics of policing includes 'consent and balance' and 'independence and accountability' (Scarman, 1982, p. 102). In 1285 the Statute of Winchester established the basic obligations and procedures for the preservation of peace. This quite clearly outlined that it was the responsibility of all people to maintain law and order and to bring offenders to justice before a court thus giving them the opportunity to be tried by their peers (Rowe, 2008, p. 26).

Police officers are required to use their discretion and personal judgement when dealing with situations. They must act with integrity in order to maintain the co-operation of the public. In principle, policing is generally conducted with the consent of the community therefore there is often no necessity to use physical force (Waddington, 1991, p. 4). Waddington suggests that police officers are greatly assisted by the public when there is respect rather than fear, therefore policing by consent is vital to maintaining law and order (1994, p. 19). Officers act with minimum supervision however they remain accountable for their actions.

During the eighteenth century England was embarking on the industrial revolution, steam engines and power looms negated the need for unskilled labourers leading to unemployment and serious crime problems. The Cities were developing into slums with mass poverty and overcrowding. People were turning to crime in order to survive subsequently crime on the streets of England was out of control. Crime rates were escalating faster than the growth of the population (Bailey, 1981, p. 13; Emsley, 1996, p. 25). Local people formed vigilante groups in an attempt to regain control however these were unsuccessful. In 1805 Henry Fielding, Chief Magistrate, established mounted and foot patrols of London to restore order. Fielding instigated the help of local citizens, volunteers were used to attend the scene of a crime, gather evidence, diffuse a situation and detain offenders. These volunteers became known as the 'Bow Street Runners' (B. Berg, 1999, p. 26).

In 1829 Sir Robert Peel, Britain's Home Secretary, pioneered the Metropolitan Police Act, which established the Metropolitan Police of London. The force was divided into seventeen divisions each with a Superintendent, 4 Inspectors, 19 Sergeants and 171 Constables (Lee, 1901, p. 236). Sir Charles Rowan and Richard Mayne were appointed as the first Commissioners of the Metropolitan police, Justices of the Peace in charge of the Force. They recognised the need to provide impartial embodiment of the

law with a strong service ethic towards the public (Reiner, 1992a, p. 762). Sir Robert recognised that crime prevention was an important element of policing. He introduced “the Peelian Reforms”, a series of guidelines, which suggested the police organisational structure ought to be similar to the military: hence the hierarchical rank structure, individual identification or collar numbers, regimented discipline, uniform and appearance and military style drill practice. He also suggested that the key performance indicator in relation to the efficiency of the police would be the absence of crime. The public continue to associate the presence of a police officer with the absence of crime (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2010, p. 3). He also outlined the need for the efficient use of resources by demand analysis (L. Berg, 1992, p. 25). Throughout the 1800's there were various pieces of legislation, which established paid police forces throughout England and Wales (see Appendix A).

The Introduction of women into the service

In the early 1900's feminist and social purity campaigners identified the need for female officers to deal with issues relating to women and children (Emsley, 2009, p. 179). However it was the onset of the First World War, which first introduced women into police forces in England and Wales, around 4000 women were initially trained. They were not sworn officers, had no real powers, they simply wore dark clothing or an official looking uniform together with a lettered armband to indicate their affiliation to the police force, (Levine, 1994, p. 34). Duties focused on the traditional female roles of service, nurturing, and protecting morals and virtues: as such, they did not threaten male police officers' terrain therefore they were tolerated. Their work revolved around women and children, they were not permitted to participate in 'real police work' (B. Berg, 1999, p. 289; Remington, 1983, p. 118; Rowe, 2008, p. 106). They were permitted to patrol on foot, for their own safety this was always in pairs and never independently. They were closely followed by

two attested male constables, again this was for their own protection; the purpose of these initial patrols was most definitely preventative work.

In 1915 the first female officer was sworn in, however the Home Office declared it illegal as the law did not permit women to hold the office of constable (Lock, 1986, p. 1193). In 1920 the Baird Committee reviewed the employment of women within the police organisation and concluded that women ought to become an integral part of the police force. Despite these recommendations, in 1922 the number of women in the police in London declined from 112 to just 24 and by 1924 the numbers had declined to just 110 in the whole of the Country (Young, 1991, p. 201). The Bridgeman Committee of 1924 and the Royal Commission on Police Powers and Procedures in 1929 both advocated the necessity of employing policewomen. Their role was clearly defined to include those matters that related to women and children, their ability to take statements from children who were victims of sexual abuse was deemed to be of particular importance. They were also expected to deal with any moral and sexual issues, thus giving female officers responsibility for controlling their own sex (Heidensohn, 1992, p. 52).

Throughout the 1900's women continued to work in separate 'policewomen's departments', they had their own managers but were accountable to 'all-male' senior officers (Heidensohn, 2005, p. 561). They were tasked with patrolling the streets and open spaces to deal with children and young girls, specialising in sexual offences and missing persons. It was clearly stated, "that they are not expected to undertake any duty which they may be physically unfitted to carry out" (The Open University and Metropolitan Police Authority, 2009). All female recruits had to be between 25 and 34 years of age, not less than 5' 4" tall and unmarried, although a widow with no young children would be considered. Women were eligible to apply for promotion but only to the rank of Inspector. They were not expected to work nights and their pay was less than their male colleagues. These differences reinforced the macho culture

within the organisation, policemen tolerated policewomen as they were able to fulfil a unique role rather than trying to compete with their male colleagues (B. Berg, 1999, p. 290). Heidensohn argues:

“The history of women in policing showed them having a caring protective role and looking after women offenders. Their role in physically restraining disorder is, in short, an unsuitable job for a women” (1995, p. 173).

The formation of the 43 Forces of England and Wales

The Bow Street Runners continued to work alongside the Metropolitan police until the late 1930's when they were eventually absorbed into the Metropolitan police force. In the early years the public were both hostile and disrespectful towards officers, with physical attacks being a regular occurrence (Ascoli, 1979, p. 95; Reith, 1948, p. 41). The rapid turnover of staff and the quality of the recruits did little to improve public perceptions of the police (Rowe, 2008, p. 31). However esteem for Sir Robert's police officers grew rapidly, by 1962 the majority of the public now had the greatest of respect for the police (Reiner, 1992a, p. 763). The public began to call them 'bobbies' after Sir Robert Peel, a term which continues to be used today.

The Peelian reforms remain evident in modern policing, with the continued use of a military style rank structure in all forces, every officer is still issued with a unique, identifying, collar number and the use of performance indicators have been retained as key to demonstrating efficiency. All forces within England and Wales have retained a probationary period and provide extensive training for new recruits. The police service remains under governmental control and is obliged to maintain extensive records. In 1939 the Municipal Corporations Act was introduced, legislation which allowed other areas, outside of London, to create their own police forces. Legislation in 1946 led to a number of amalgamations, which meant 45 boroughs were

actually abolished. There were further amalgamations in 1964 and so began the 43 separate police forces of England and Wales that we have today (see Appendix B).

Resistance towards women

Resistance towards women remained incredibly strong and by 1939 only 45 of the 183 police forces in England and Wales were employing women. Women themselves played an integral part in this resistance as they frequently denied their own strengths in favour of male characteristics. Feminine instinct and emotional intelligence were perceived as a sign of weakness therefore rejected (Young, 1991, p. 202). Male qualities remained prevalent as women frequently displayed the same values as their male colleagues and adopted similar behaviour patterns in order to be accepted (Remmington, 1983, p. 131). These behaviours included violence, aggression, and courage, all typical masculine values encapsulated within the police culture. The completion of a 'tough manful act' was a clear indicator of acceptance. Promotion was also seen as a recognised path for acceptance although this route had opportunities for harassment and isolation (Rabe-Hemp, 2008, p. 264).

The police uniform and dress code appears to have been designed to allow women to morph into surrogate men. Strict regulations enforce the masculinity of the dress code: flat black lace up shoes, hair must be worn above the collar and is not allowed to cover the ears, no jewellery other than wedding and or engagement rings and a wrist watch (WMP, 2011). No obvious make up, no earrings, no nail varnish, in fact anything that could be construed as feminine is not allowed. Until five years ago new police recruits in the UK were subjected to daily uniform inspections, marching, saluting and

regular drill practice to instil discipline, again masculine values which may deter many female applicants.

Historically the rigorous recruitment and selection practices continued to effectively exclude outsiders and maintain white male supremacy. Recruitment interviews and medical examinations took place on the same day therefore due to accommodation issues, male and female applicants were seen on separate days (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1990, p. 17). Measures included excessive physical requirements and height restrictions, the consequence of which excluded women. Background investigations and home visits were also part of the recruitment process. Candidates would be assessed and those who failed to express the 'correct' attitudes toward the meaning of masculinity, including an aura of toughness and aggression would be rejected. Part of the selection procedure in the 1960's described by Alison Halford required her to parade naked from the waist up, in front of a panel of senior policemen, it is not clear if this was a formal or informal procedure at the time (Halford & Barnes, 1993, p. 17). Whilst in this particularly vulnerable state they were asked a series of questions which they were expected to answer comprehensively.

Evolution of the British Bobby

From the conception of the British police force until the mid 1960's officers patrolled their designated areas or beats on foot. In order to establish a significant police presence on the streets, the expectations were, "to patrol their beats steadily and constantly for nine consecutive hours, at a steady pace of two and a half miles per hour" (Reith, 1948, p. 32). Despite this strategy the public complained that they did not see enough police on the streets, a public meeting in 1830 highlighted their concerns (Rowe, 2008, p. 31).

In 1967 motorised patrols were introduced to allow officers to patrol a greater geographical area, officers were allocated personal radios which enabled them to respond to incidents more quickly (Newburn, 2008, p. 85). This was perhaps a turning point in police history. The intention was to create a greater public service however the exact opposite occurred. The role was recast as 'tough, dashing, formidable crime buster' (Chibnall, 2003, p. 71).

The service element of the organisation diminished with this style of policing, contact with the public was reduced and with it came the introduction of 'fire brigade' policing. This type of policing is reactive, officers are continually responding to emergency incidents, only dealing with the current situation by 'putting the fire out', then waiting for the next call. This style of policing controls the 'here and now', the immediate problems, but does nothing to resolve or control the longer term issues (Tilley, 2003, p. 313). In contrast problem-orientated, intelligence led and community policing offer a variety of tactics that have been considered by police forces worldwide over the past 30 years. These particular policing styles adopt a strategic approach to problem solving, which in turn allows forces greater direction in order to improve public satisfaction and police performance.

Legislative changes

Despite the continued resistance towards female officers, equalities legislation was introduced in 1973 in an attempt to ensure women had the opportunity to become fully integrated into the police organisation. The Sex Discrimination Act made it unlawful to have a separate women's department therefore they were disbanded. Since the introduction of this Legislation in 1975 there has been a steady increase in the number of female officers. However despite this legislation and the gradual increase of female officers, the subordination of women in this male dominated environment continues.

Emsley suggests the legislation had a negative impact on the culture, in particular officers felt it was no longer necessary to modify their language and began to boast of their 'sexual prowess' in the presence of their female colleagues (2009, p. 270).

Sexual harassment has been identified as a way controlling women within the workplace and ensuring male domination (Abbott, 2000, p. 79). For many years women were still not permitted to perform particular police functions, they were denied the opportunity to specialise in specific areas and there were very few promotions; sexism was rife (Paddison, 1992, p. 5; Young, 1991, p. 206). Female officers were not issued with truncheons until the mid 1980's: even then they were a much smaller version than the male officers' truncheon. In the 1980's and early 1990's female supervisors wore small metal chevrons on their epaulettes whilst male sergeants had large cloth chevrons sewn onto their jacket sleeves. Female officers felt this undermined their status (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1990, p. 55).

Research in the 1980's identified that male officers continued to have difficulty accepting women into policing (Balkin, 1988, p. 29; Halford, 1987, p. 19): these negative attitudes were particularly evident in older officers (Heidensohn, 1995, p. 203). Research in Australia and America confirmed Heidensohn's theory that certain police tasks were perceived to be inappropriate and unsuitable for women. It was also suggested they were ineffective partners when physical strength was a necessity, particularly during 'fight' situations which consequently led to a tendency to become overprotective towards the female officers (Martin, 1982, p. 130; Remington, 1983, p. 123; Wilkinson & Froyland, 1996, p. 4). Research by Balkin concluded that "policemen don't like policewomen" as they were afraid the women would undermine their masculinity. Their views were consistently reinforced by their fellow colleagues who had similar distorted views (Balkin, 1988, p. 36).

1984 saw a major catalyst for change the outdated 'Judges' Rules' were withdrawn and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) was introduced. This legislation created designated custody stations with custody sergeants, detailed codes of practice to deal with suspects and evidence, an independent complaints procedure, the introduction of lay visitors to monitor practices to ensure compliance and also a provision for greater public consultation with regards to specific policing issues (Henry, 2007, p. 192). PACE and the Codes of Practice remains the current legislation and procedures in operation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This change was further enhanced in 1986 with the introduction of the Crown Prosecution Service, ensuring an independent review of police actions and ultimately more accountability.

Gaston and Alexander considered the age and marital status of police recruits: it was identified that female recruits were younger, 90% were single compared to 50% of male officers (1997, p. 52). Female officers felt isolated and vulnerable, they received little or no encouragement to progress to specialist departments or seek promotion. In 1983 Alison Halford was appointed Assistant Chief Constable in Merseyside police, she became the highest ranking female officer in Great Britain at the age of 43 (Halford & Barnes, 1993, p. 12). However she was unable to reach the pinnacle of her career, after three failed promotion attempts to become Chief Constable she felt the organisation was still recovering from the shock of her appointment. Promotion to the ultimate rank remained out of her grasp, in her opinion, this was due to male domination, lack of flexibility and a non acceptance by senior male officers to acknowledge women as their equals (Halford, 1987, p. 19). Halford's frustrations continued as she failed to gain promotion on a further six occasions, with the backing of the Equal Opportunities Commission she took the police authority to an Equality Tribunal for sex discrimination. In July 1992, after two years of relentless pressure, the case was finalised in an out of court settlement which resulted in a moral victory for women by raising the profile of the issue of sex discrimination (Halford & Barnes, 1993, p. 245).

Subsequently in June 1995 the first female Chief Constable was appointed, Pauline Clare became the Chief Constable of Lancashire (The Independent, 1995).

Modernisation of the police structure began in 1994 with the Police and Magistrates' Court Act, which shifted the balance of power from police authorities' towards the Home Secretary. This enabled the government to set national policing objectives with measurable performance indicators to ensure even greater accountability through quantitative assessment (Henry, 2007, p. 193). This was subsequently enhanced in 2002 with the Police Reform Act, which enabled the publication of formal policing plans. It also established the Police Standards Unit and introduced a new Police Performance Assessment framework.

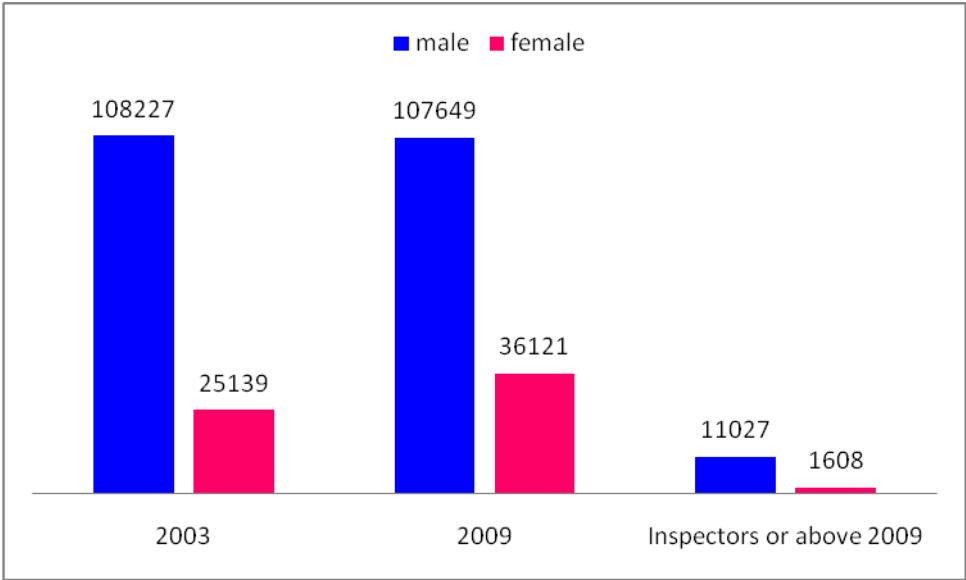
Since the introduction of the sex discrimination act in 1975 there have been a number of cases brought to law against a variety of UK police forces. The following is just one example: in 2007 a female firearms officer, PC Barbara Lynford, won a claim of sex discrimination against Sussex Police as a result of constant harassment, abusive treatment and bullying by her male colleagues. The officer was posted to the firearms unit at Gatwick Airport in 2002 she was the only female on a team of 19 officers. Consequently she became isolated and claimed she was made to feel like a 'non-member of the team' (BBC News, 2007). As a result of the discrimination, she suffered work related stress and was off sick from work for over two years: she was awarded substantial financial compensation.

Female Officers

The number of police officers in the UK continued to rise steadily in 2003 there were a total of 133,366 police officers in the 43 forces of England and

Wales, including 25,139 females, 19% of the total. Of these there were 795 female officers of the rank of Inspector or above (Office for National Statistics, 2003). In March 2009 the total number of police officers increased to 143,770 including 36,121 female, representing 25% of the total. There was also an increase in the number of senior officers 11,027 in total, with 1608 (15%) female officers of the rank of inspector or above (Mulchandani & Sigurdsson, 2009, p. 5), see Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: UK Police Officer Strength



Notwithstanding the overall increase in the total number of female officers in the UK the number continues to be significantly lower than the population ratio of male and females. In 2009 the mid-year population figures for people living in England and Wales comprised of 51% females and 49% males (Office for National Statistics, 2010). If the police forces of England and Wales are to be truly representative of the communities they serve then clearly the number of female offices ought to be significantly increased. However initial recruitment is not the only issue, Dick and Jankowicz suggest that retention of female officers remains an issue (2001, p. 193). Their

research identified that women are choosing to leave the police organisation voluntarily as the demands of police work are perceived to be incompatible with the demands of motherhood; this subsequently impacts on promotion prospects for females.

The police force subject of this research currently employs 8,698 police officers, 6144 male and 2554 female: 29% of the total force strength is female, 4% higher than the national average. The officers are supported by 4,446 police staff, 586 special constables and 817 police community support officers (PCSOs), 63% of the police staff is female. This particular police force has been included in the 'Times top 50 list' of places where women want to work on four consecutive occasions and is the only police force in the country to have achieved this accolade (Where women want to work, 2009). The award is given to those organisations that are able to demonstrate their commitment towards gender issues, including: recruitment, retention and development of female employees.

Despite this prestigious award and the overall increase in the number of female officers, it remains apparent that negative, sexist attitudes towards women persist and continues to be a common problem facing female officers (J Foster, 2003, p. 214; Lonsway, 2006, p. 42). Female officers find they are having to constantly prove their abilities and outperform their male counterparts in order to be acknowledged as competent (Loftus, 2009a, p. 53; Lonsway, 2006, p. 42; Martin, 1982, p. 124). The 'good old boys' network remains prevalent, a prominent barrier towards women's advancement within the police (Lonsway, 2006, p. 43).

In this chapter I have looked at the origins of the British Police service and explored the integration of women. In the next chapter it is my intention to consider the change in structure of police forces and to examine the

emergence of specialist departments within police organisations across the U.K. Of particular interest is the representation of women within these departments.

Chapter three - The emergence of Specialist Police Departments

In this chapter it is my intention to examine the departure from traditional policing strategies towards the emergence of specialist police departments. All 43 police forces have evolved and developed their own individual structure. Of particular interest in these emerging roles is that of female officers due to their continued under-representation within these specialist units.

In 1842 the Metropolitan Police introduced its first detective force, a team of plain-clothes officers utilised for the investigation of crime. Following a corruption scandal in 1877 the department was reorganised, in 1878 the name changed to CID (Criminal Investigations Department), this remains the accepted term for plain clothes officers in the UK (Metropolitan Police Service, 2010a). Emsley raises concerns with regards to the emerging culture within the CID suggesting it had developed into a 'force within a force' (2009, p. 272). A few years later the Metropolitan police established the very first specialist department, Special Branch, a spin off from the CID. This plain-clothes department continues to exist today their remit remains counter terrorism. In 1921 Chief Inspector Lilian Wyles was the very first woman to serve as a fully attested, ranking officer in the CID. In 1918 the Metropolitan police formed the 'flying squad', a group of mobile detectives, given authority to operate anywhere in London to tackle serious, organised crime (Metropolitan Police Service, n.d.-b).

Historically uniformed officers or detective constables conducted the majority of police work. However the modern police service is no longer exploiting the 'Omni-competent', generalist constable, instead police forces are creating units to provide an array of specialist functionality with explicitly defined remits (Roberts & Innes, 2009, p. 339). Today the Metropolitan police boasts over

200 different roles within the police service both uniform and non uniform, giving individuals a varied career path (Metropolitan Police Service, 2010b).

In 1884, as a result of two officers in London being murdered, policemen were given the option to carry handguns whilst on nighttime patrols. This remained the situation until 1936 when the revolvers were removed and stored in a cupboard. At this time a Sergeant could issue the firearms to trained officers if the circumstances justified the need. In 1966 as a direct result of the murder of three plain-clothes officers, the Metropolitan Police introduced a dedicated Firearms Department, arming around 17% of their officers. This department provided specific training for officers in the safe use of firearms and appropriate tactics.

During the 1980's a number of people were fired upon and killed by police officers: in June 1980 a pregnant woman and her unborn baby were shot during crossfire between police and her boyfriend. In 1985 during an early morning raid on a house officers mistakenly shot a woman causing serious injuries, whilst searching the house for her son (Waddington, 1988, p. 4). This particular incident was the catalyst for the 1985 Brixton riots. Again in 1985 during a morning raid a 5 year old boy, John Shorthouse, was shot dead by police (BBC News, 1985). This resulted in stricter controls and improved training, many officers had their firearms licence revoked (Police Firearms Officers Association, 2010). West Yorkshire Police were the first to introduce armed, instant response vehicles in 1976. Armed policing has evolved all UK police forces now have a firearms capacity although only a small percentage of officers regularly carry firearms. Each force has a fully operational firearms departments which routinely deploys Armed Response Vehicles (ARV's) (Metropolitan Police Service, n.d.-a) who have the responsibility and capability of dealing with any incident where a firearm is believed to be involved.

The total number of authorised firearms officers (AFO's) in the UK has increased steadily over the years: the current number of AFO's is 6868 (see Appendix C for a detailed breakdown of the figures). However the number of serious or fatal injuries as a result of a firearms incident in England and Wales fell by 2% in 2008, there were 455 incidents which was down from 468 the previous year (Home Office, 2008a). In the police force subject of this research the number of firearms officers reached a peak in 2007/2008 when there were 177 AFO's, this number has decreased slightly to the current levels of 165.

During the 19th Century police officers routinely took their 'pet' dogs to work and utilised them whilst on patrol. In 1888 the Metropolitan Police attempted to use police dogs to assist with a murder investigation however it was not until 1938 that properly trained police dogs were introduced into the force. West Midlands Police introduced their first fully trained police dogs in 1951. The force now boasts 69 handlers and runs its own successful breeding programme. Police dogs are used to assist officers with the prevention and detection of crime, they can also be utilised in public order situations to aid crowd control. Forces also make use of specialist dogs to assist with searching. They are trained to locate drugs, firearms, cash or explosives. More recently some forces have also trained their specialist dogs to look for human remains and blood.

The Traffic department has responsibility for assisting uniform officers to improve public trust and confidence in the police by reducing the number of traffic related deaths, injuries and crimes. They endeavour to achieve this by denying criminals the use of the road networks and improving driving standards in order to make UK roads safer.

There are dedicated Counter Terrorism departments across the UK, each providing a regional response to counter terrorism issues. Dedicated officers including detectives, surveillance and intelligence officers staff these. They have responsibility for collating information, which will identify offenders connected to terrorism, disrupting their activities in order to, minimise the potential risk of a terrorist attack on the UK. They are proactive in their approach, working closely with communities to protect vulnerable people, preventing them from being recruited by violent extremists.

All police forces in the UK have access to air support, providing officers with an aerial view of the ground, utilising specialist equipment to assist with searching, containment and vehicle pursuits. They also provide intelligence led high visibility patrols to prevent and detect crime.

Events planning are responsible for co-coordinating and delivering a corporate approach to the planning and resourcing of all major or significant events, including VIP visits and mutual aid requests to other forces. They also work in partnership with the local authorities and other partner agencies. Some forces also have a football planning team to co-ordinate the force response to the policing of football sporting events.

Territorial Support Group (TSG) or Operational Support Units (OSU) consists of officers with a variety of specialist skills who provide police forces with a strategic reserve for major and serious incidents, including public disorder situations and critical response. The officers are trained in a variety of skills including, public order, search, rapid entry, underwater search and body recovery. They also provide a response to any chemical biological radiological nuclear (CBRN) incidents. They provide an anti-terrorist and domestic extremism capability. They respond to spontaneous public disorder and also assist with the reduction of crime.

Recently a number of departments, including child abuse, sex offender management and domestic violence, merged to form Public Protection Units (PPU's). They were established to protect the most vulnerable people in society, including both children and adults. The department works in collaboration with other agencies to provide a multi agency response to physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults. Its remit also includes the monitoring and investigation of high-risk sex offenders. Child protection remains one of the few areas where female officers consistently dominate.

A number of police forces utilise horses to assist with certain policing tasks, which include public order situations, major incidents and sporting events. Merseyside police established its mounted branch in 1886 (Merseyside police, 2010). Some forces have marine and under water search teams or are part of a consortium, to assist with the search and recovery of bodies in water, property, decomposed bodies on land, submerged vehicles and also missing persons.

The National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) was established in April 1992 to centralise the collation and distribution of intelligence on serious and organised criminality. The overall intention was to support all police forces in Great Britain and Northern Ireland by gathering, storing and analysing intelligence relating to crime. In April 2006 NCIS merged into the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), which is an executive non-departmental public body of the Home Office. SOCA officers have the powers of a police constable, an officer of HM Revenue and Customs, an immigration officer, or a combination of these. SOCA has no uniformed officers or marked vehicles. Their remit is to investigate serious organised crime which impacts on the UK, including Class A drugs, people smuggling and human trafficking, major gun crime, fraud, computer crime and money laundering (Serious Organised

Crime Agency, 2010). As a result of a restructure SOCA is due to merge with the National Crime Agency (Home Office, 2010b, p. 32).

Regionalised training centres were created to facilitate the initial residential training of probationary constables. The National Police Training (NPT) centres provided basic training, including: legislation, practical scenarios, drill, first aid and self-defence techniques. The regimented regime was designed to instil discipline and team working into the new recruits. NPT changed its name to Central Police Training and Development Authority (Centrex), and subsequently became the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA) in 2006. At this time regional training centres were disbanded and individual forces became responsible for their own probationary training. The NPIA has remained committed to 'career-long learning', providing a variety of development opportunities. In addition it has responsibility for developing technology and support services to front line policing (NPIA, 2010). The Government have recently announced a decision to phase out the NPIA by 2012. A review is currently being undertaken to establish the essential services provided by the NPIA which will subsequently be transferred to another organisation, possibly the proposed National Crime Agency (Home Office, 2010b, p. 32).

The creation of numerous specialist departments has resulted in a multitude of sub-cultures (Loftus, 2009a, p. 85) which Glomseth and Gottschalk suggest are affected by the tasks performed (2009, p. 3). They studied two comparative areas of policing in the Norwegian police, CID and counter terrorism. They concluded that the culture within the counter terrorist department was driven by time schedules and deadlines therefore speed was a vital element. Conversely officers working in CID 'identified sufficient time and not being run by their watch' as vital components to their job. Holdaway and Parker's survey in 1998 revealed many women disliked the negative culture within the CID (1998, p. 48). They identified a culture within a culture:

child abuse work was regarded as lower in status to CID despite the fact that there were distinct similarities with the actual crimes investigated. The suggestion of a variety of sub cultures within departments is particularly relevant to this research as it is my intention to examine the cultures within the firearms unit of one metropolitan force.

The composition of each of the 43 forces throughout England and Wales remains very different. Individual forces having developed their own unique structure, which includes a variety of specialist departments to assist with the prevention and detection of crime in order to make communities feel safer. However a recent report published by HMIC raised concerns regarding the number of specialist officers involved in the investigation of crime, they looked at two cases, a burglary and a rape. It was established that 30 different officers had been involved in the burglary and 24 different people were involved in the first 12 hours of the rape investigation. HMIC concluded that the increase in the number of officers working within specialist departments has created inefficiencies and suggested a complete re-design of policing may be required in order to address the issues and also deal with imminent budget cuts (2010, p. 4). All police forces will be required to rationalise the need for specialist departments taking into account the assessment of risk, which they offset. This impending radical review may have an impact on the number of women working within specialist departments as the number of vacancies may be drastically reduced.

Women in specialist units

There is an abundance of research available in relation to policing, women in policing and more recently senior policewomen (Blok & Brown, 2005; J. Brown, 1996b; Coffey, Brown, & Savage, 1992; Radford, 1989). However there is very little which relates directly to policewomen working within

specialist departments. Public perceptions and attitudes relating to policing often re-enforces gender stereotypes. The traditional view of women being more suited to conventional roles of child abuse, domestic violence and sexual offences (Beare, 2008, p. 274; Blok & Brown, 2005, p. 16). Women continue to remain in the minority in most specialist police departments (Hampshire, 1998, p. 4; Pettman, 1996, p. 12; West Midlands Police, 2008; Williams, 1998, p. 2).

Historically policewomen were directed towards the more traditional roles of the service (Coulson, 2006, p. 19). In 1991 Coffey's research regarding career preferences for police women suggested that women had career aspirations to work within specialist departments however the cultural attitudes and attitudinal bias had prevented their attainment of such goals (1991, p. 65). An example being their reluctance to apply for firearms training as their perception was, 'firearms is a male domain' (Hampshire, 1998, p. 55; Williams, 1998, p. 19). There remains a perception within the culture of the police organisation that working excessively long hours demonstrates commitment to the job and is rewarded by promotion or transfer to a specialist department. The long hour's culture generally excludes women with children or other caring responsibilities and may be a direct result of the hierarchical power structures within the organisation (P. Dick & Jankowicz, 2001, p. 193).

Research by Ainsworth, Bell and Froyland concluded that women were not considered by their male colleagues to be equal or as effective and that they should not be allocated the same tasks (1996, p. 6). Male attitudes towards female colleagues has been described as a major source of discrimination and a constant battle for acceptance (White, 1996, p. 3). As mentioned earlier in the chapter, in 1987 Alison Halford, the first female assistant chief constable, raised concerns regarding female advancement within the police organisation and felt the pinnacle of her career, that of chief constable, was beyond her grasp (Halford, 1987, p. 19; Young, 1991, p. 205).

Physical strength is considered an essential asset by male officers who suggest that female officers are hindered by their lack of physical strength which subsequently prevents them from competently undertaking their role (Herbert, 2001, p. 59; S. Martin, 1996, p. 3). This attitude is supported by Fletcher's oral history research, following interviews with over 350 police officers she heard the story of the '250 lb man in the alley' countless times (Fletcher, 1996, p. 41). This particular story re-enforced the machismo stereotypical view that police work is confrontational, combative and dominated by the need to use physical force, therefore an "unsuitable job for a woman". However research by Poole and Pogrebin suggests that female officers were at least equal to male officers in most areas of police work (1988, p. 49). This is supported by Westmarland's study, her findings suggest women were actually achieving slightly higher arrest rates for those crimes usually associated with male competences of physical force, strength and use of violence (Westmarland, 2001, p. 185). However it should be acknowledged that higher arrest rates are not always an indicator of successful outcomes.

In the late 1980's the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Metropolitan Police undertook a joint four-year programme to promote equality of opportunity. The final report concluded that women were capable of undertaking the full range of policing tasks and confirmed that the key factor when considering deployment of officers was that of individual ability, and not gender (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1990, p. ii). It is implied that the traditional image of the high adrenaline 'macho cop arrests' is unsupportable with women being equally capable, however the culture of the organisation suggests otherwise. Women themselves, whilst in the minority, feel they are at least equal to their male colleagues in performing their role if not more capable (Seklecki & Paynich, 2007, p. 29).

Westmarland suggests that women are not being differentially deployed on the streets but concludes that men continue to dominate in specialist departments, “where masculinity really counts, however, in the departments where men are men, women are absent” (2001, p. 188). However Brown, Maidment and Bull suggest that at the time of their research, there remained some gender specific deployment of officers that could be deemed appropriate skill task matching. They concluded that some evidence of gender bias remains, suggesting this continues to be a psychological and cultural issue (1993, p. 130). Gaston and Alexander identified a gender balance in community relations and uniform patrol duties (1997, p. 49). However female officers continue to dominate in departments which specialise in the investigation of sexual offences, in particular child protection (Gaston & Alexander, 1997, p. 49; C. Martin, 1996, p. 526; WMP, 2010). Holdaway and Parker identified a culture within the CID, which was particularly discriminatory and exclusionary. Surprisingly however they found that these practices were deterring more male officers than female officers from applying to join the department (1998, p. 59).

Research by Brown and Sargent found, at the time, only 2.6% of authorised firearms officers were women, with 5% of forces having none and 42% only having one or two token women (1995, p. 135). Women were excluded from the Metropolitan Police firearms department as a matter of policy until 1988. This policy also had an impact on the opportunities for women to work within the Diplomatic Protection Group (DPG) as they too were armed. The justification for the policy had been a belief that female officers’ hands were too small for the grip of the standard issue firearm and also that they would not be capable of completing the physical selection test, which included scaling a five foot wall and carrying an eleven stone weight.

Twenty female officers were given the opportunity to undertake a day’s training with the Metropolitan police firearms unit. They all demonstrated their

capabilities and did not display any difficulties with either the fitness levels or the weapons handling, therefore the policy was changed (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1990, p. 23). By December 1989 there were 22 female firearms officers in the Metropolitan Police firearms unit, out of a total of 2510 officers. Despite this initial increase the number of women within the Metropolitan police firearms unit remains low. It would appear that there simply are not enough women applying to join. During 2002 and 2005 only 50 females applied to join the Metropolitan Police firearms unit compared with 1,083 male officers (Emsley, 2009, p. 273; Hale, 2008). Of these, eighty-two were successful, but only one was female. This particular force attempted to substantially increase the number of female firearms officers by the use of a 'female only programme'. This proved unsuccessful as women felt they were receiving special treatment and being singled out, therefore it was stopped. However the Metropolitan police force continues to promote equality of opportunity for women with the persistent use of 'insight days', practice fitness tests, weapons handling and the availability of female mentors.

Brown and Sargent conclude that rather than women being less motivated to join firearms departments their study suggests it is "more likely to be aspects of police culture and embedded individual and organisational attitudes which inhibit women from becoming firearms officers" (1995, p. 13). Coulson suggests women are not interested in carrying a firearm and do not want the responsibility of, potentially, having to shoot someone (2006, p. 20). She also suggests that family commitments are a barrier to women with children, as they feel unable to fulfil their obligations to the role.

In 2009 one of the UK's smallest police forces, Staffordshire, attempted to address the issue of under-representation of female officers within their firearms department. This particular force has 69 qualified firearms officers of which there were only two females, 3%. The force conducted a series of open days to raise awareness. The initial findings suggested there was a

general reluctance amongst female officers to have any involvement with firearms, “the guns were too heavy, the fitness tests too hard and firearms officers are all macho men” (Blain, 2011, p. 16). As a result of the positive action initiatives there was an increase in the number of female officers to seven, 10%.

The size of the weapons was considered to be a barrier therefore Cleveland police introduced a smaller handgun and rifle in an attempt to attract more female officers (Gray, 2007). However this ‘choice’ of weapon may not resolve the situation as female officers feel obligated to complete the training to the same standard as their male colleagues, by choosing a smaller weapon they may feel their credibility could be questioned (Loftus, 2009a, p. 53).

Controversial past of specialist departments

A number of specialist departments have been linked to corruption and malpractice. In the 1970’s the Metropolitan police launched an internal investigation, Operation Countryman, which identified bribery and corruption amongst officers was rife. In 1977 Superintendent Ken Drury, head of the Flying Squad, together with 12 other officers, were jailed for accepting bribes (Walker, 2004). Public concern heightened with regards to the Metropolitan Police Special Patrol Group (SPG). This elite group of officers had responsibility for policing major public events and disturbances. In 1973 two armed SPG officers were responsible for killing two Pakistani people at India House in London. There was a second incident in 1979 where they were considered responsible for the death of a protester in London, however there was insufficient evidence to charge any officer over the death (Lewis, 2010). The SPG was disbanded in 1986 and replaced with the Territorial Support Group (TSG).

In 1989 the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad was disbanded as a result of allegations of police malpractice. An inquiry identified many of the officer's in the squad had served for prolonged periods of time (Kaye, 1991, p. 12). The department had a macho culture that deterred female officers from joining. Their investigations relied heavily on confessions and information from informants, legal representation was often delayed. Subsequently more than thirty people had their convictions overturned in the Court of Appeal and awarded substantial compensation (House of Commons, 1999). In 2001 three Flying Squad detectives were sent to prison after arranging the release of an informant to assist with an offence (Walker, 2004).

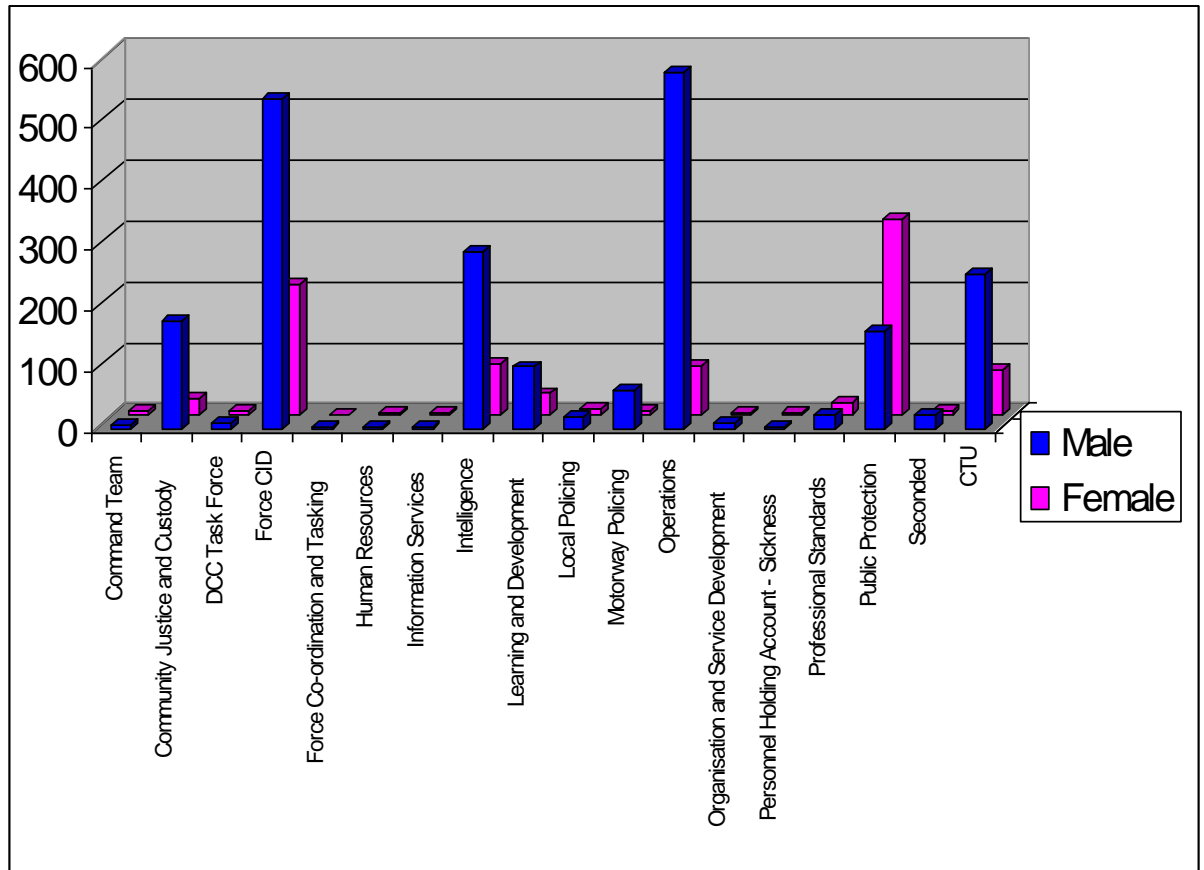
In 1993 as a result of a HMIC recommendation, most police forces in the UK introduced tenure for all posts other than uniform patrol. Tenure was implemented to ensure movement between specialist posts, returning officers to core policing to retain their skills. There was also a suggestion that a healthy turnover of staff decreased the potential for corruption, as previously seen in some specialist squads and increased the equality of opportunity (Mundy, 1999, p. 1). Tenure was applied by specifying the maximum length of time an officer was permitted to remain in a particular post before returning to uniform patrol, usually for a minimum period of twelve months. There are concerns that specialist departments are able to isolate themselves into self contained groups within the wider police family thus allowing themselves to become distant from female colleagues (Westmarland, 2001, p. 140). This isolation can become a further deterrent for female officers. Tenure was useful to ensure movement and prevent this isolation. However the force subject of this research no longer utilises tenure instead it operates a performance management policy, with some posts being a fixed term.

Women in specialist units in the police force subject of this research

The force subject of this research is now divided into a variety of specialist departments including criminal investigation, counter terrorist unit, anti corruption, public protection, and the Operations Department. The following graph (Table 3.1) shows the number of male and female officers working within all specialist departments within the police organisation subject of this research.

As previously suggested the only department where there are a higher proportion of female officers to male offices is the public protection unit (Gaston & Alexander, 1997, p. 49; C. Martin, 1996, p. 526): which includes child protection, domestic violence, vulnerable adults and sex offender management, 318 females and 159 males. In all other departments women are significantly under-represented, see table 3.1. In particular the Operations Department has a considerably higher proportion of male officers 585 to only 80 female officers, 14%.

Table 3.1: Male and Female Officers working within specialist departments within the police force subject of this research



The Operations Department

The Operations Department consists of a variety of specialist units, including: airport police unit, camera enforcement, dog section, integrated emergency and events planning, incident management, operational support unit, safer travel, traffic and firearms.

The firearms department consists of a number of officers who have been selected, trained, accredited and authorised by their Chief Officer to carry a firearm operationally. The officers are trained to carry a handgun, rifle and taser. Until September 2010 the firearms unit consisted of two teams, Blue

and Orange. The teams were divided into a number of shifts to provide the appropriate cover. The officers would spend a month on the armed response vehicle (ARV) followed by a month of pro-active operations duties. All officers on the unit were considered specialist firearms officers (SFO's). In September 2010 (in the middle of this research) the department split into two distinct teams ARV operatives providing 24/7-armed response and a dedicated Operations Team.

Previous research conducted within the Operations Department of the chosen force examined the culture and suggested that there was no clear or recognisable culture but a number of well-defined sub-cultures (Gibling & Hirst, 2007, p. 13). The senior leadership team felt it was important to identify a 'road map of priorities' to professionalise the department (Gibling & Hirst, 2007, p. 4). Interviews and focus groups were conducted with a total of 62 officers and police staff from the Operations Department (54 male and 7 female participants). Key findings indicated that the primary functions for each department had a significant impact on the culture however the overriding attitude was positive with staff demonstrating 100% commitment with a 'can do' attitude, always putting the job first. However Gibling and Hirst suggested that this driven attitude had resulted in a 'masculine, male-dominated, insular department' which appeared elitist and aloof to those on the outside (2007, p. 14). There was clear evidence of 'silo-working', with each specialist unit working in isolation they did not consider themselves to be part of the Operations Department, and were extensively removed from the priorities for the force. There was obvious resistance to change.

Gibling and Hirst identified very distinct, separate cultures within the various sections of the Operations Department, of particular note were the findings relating to the firearms unit: the officers were extremely proud to be part of a professional, elite team. One of the main characteristics of the firearms culture was the group cohesion and team working, one officer responded "a

group of like minded people who are happy working together” (Gibling & Hirst, 2007, p. 17). The role was described in terms of male characteristics and values. There was evidence that new staff were required to ‘fit in’, diversity and difference appeared to be resisted. Staff did not recognise their connection to the department’s mission statement. Gibling and Hirst suggest that complacency may have developed regarding strategic priorities, performance and accountability. As a result of this previous research a number of areas were highlighted which required development, including, improved communication between management and staff, a corporate image with a development plan and a set of key values for the whole of the Operations Department to adopt to create a team ethos. They recommended the continued use of open days, taster days and short attachments to promote the department. They also suggested the introduction of a robust objective selection process. Gibling and Hirst concluded that there would always be a number of sub-cultures within the Operations Department due to the unique roles. They commented that “the department is unlikely to attract a greater diversity of people until the culture and environment in some areas is more attractive” (2007, p. 50).

In June/July 2007 the police force subject of this research conducted a survey of all female officers to explore potential barriers, which may have been preventing or discouraging them from applying to join the Operations Department. An online questionnaire was sent individually to all female officers, up to and including the rank of Inspector, 1162 female officers responded, 85% of responses were from Constables. The majority of respondents indicated they had some knowledge of the specialist units within the Operations Department. The survey highlighted a number of significant factors: female officers indicated that they lacked confidence in their own skills and abilities, including physical fitness, therefore deselected themselves prior to application. Other concerns related to issues of male domination, “The very fact that these departments are so under represented by female officers discourages females from applying” (Andronicou, 2007, p. 31). There

was also a perception that the departments were elitist and aloof. A significant number of respondents felt the departments were hard to get into. There was a perception that the specialist units could not accommodate flexible or part time working practices, 39% of respondents had caring responsibilities for children under the age of 16, therefore a lack of flexibility was a major concern (Andronicou, 2007, p. 5).

In focusing upon the results of the survey in relation to the firearms unit, 251 people said they were very interested in the work undertaken by the firearms unit, of these respondents 73% indicated they would consider applying for the role. 41% suggested they needed to be more physically fit before they would consider an application and 44% were not confident they had the right skills or abilities to be successful. Childcare issues and an interest in investigative roles were additional factors, which influenced their decisions.

The survey also tried to ascertain what measures they thought would encourage female officers to apply for specialist roles. A significant number of respondents felt a short attachment, of three days or more would be beneficial. In addition a large number of people favoured open days and more than half suggested information and publicity highlighting the roles would be useful. A small number of respondents raised concerns regarding the appropriateness of schemes tailored specifically for women.

My work has continued to explore the question of female under-representation with particular interest in the area of firearms, which remains significantly under-represented despite previous efforts. In today's modern police service the number of female officers working within certain specialist police departments remains comparatively low, as does the number of senior female police officers. During the past two years the police force subject of this research have attempted to recruit more female officers into specialist

departments by utilising positive action initiatives. This has increased the number of female officers within the Operations Department from 7% in 2007 to 12% in 2009. Similar efforts by the Metropolitan police service to promote diversity and equality have been deemed counter productive (Blok & Brown, 2005, p. 5) although other forces have reported success (Blain, 2011, p. 17; Metcalfe & Dick, 2002, p. 401).

This chapter has considered the evolution of a number of departments and their chequered history, which has highlighted the extent to which police forces have moved away from the 'Omni-competent', generalist front line response officer, towards specialist officers. On examination of this structure it would appear that overall women are gaining a foothold within the general policing organisation however they remain very much in the minority within the majority of specialist areas of policing. Of particular interest is the under-representation of female officers within the firearms unit. Currently the police force subject of this research employs 125 specialist firearms officers, 104 constables 97 male and 7 female (7%), 17 Sergeants 16 male and 1 female, 3 Inspectors 2 male and 1 female and 1 Chief Inspector male. Despite several years of positive action the number of female officers remains extremely low.

The aim of this research is to explore male and female experiences within the firearms department in order to gain a greater appreciation of the role from both gender perspectives. It is envisaged that this study will provide a significant depth of understanding regarding the cultural dynamics within the unit and a deeper understanding with regards to gender. The study will consider the personal motivations of individual officers for joining the department and also provide an opportunity to gain a valuable insight into the working environment of a firearms unit. The following chapter will consider the methodology chosen to explore these issues.

Chapter four - Methodology

The aim of the present study is to examine the gender balance and cultural dynamics within a specialist department within the police organisation, more specifically the firearms unit. The experiences and attitudes of a sample of both male and female officers working within the firearms unit will be explored. By doing so, this will provide an opportunity to gain a valuable insight into the culture of the unit, enhance the existing, limited, literature available which relates to police officers working within specialist firearms units and assist to explain under-representation of women within this particular role. This chapter will outline the research methodology chosen to explore the identified issues.

The force subject of this research is a large metropolitan force, covering an area of 348 square miles, including one major city and two smaller cities. At the time of conducting this research there are 8698 police officers in this particular force that provide a service to a diverse population of almost 2.6 million people, 18% of whom are from ethnic minority backgrounds, responding to in excess of 2,000 emergency calls each day.

Throughout the last decade there has been quite a significant increase in the number of female officers, however they continue to represent only 29% of the force. Home Office research suggests 35% of police recruits are women (Home Office, 2007, p. 7). The Operations Department consists of approximately 700 police officers and police staff, who work in various specialist units, (see chapter three for a more detailed synopsis of the department). The department is currently under-represented by female officers and officers from black and minority ethnic groups. In March 2007 the Operations Department consisted of 93% male officers and 7% female officers. The department has been proactive in recruiting women by utilising

positive action initiatives, which has resulted in an increase of 5%, bringing the total number of female officers to 12%. However the firearms department remains under-represented, with only 7% of its establishment being female.

It is recognised that there are sound operational reasons for having a balanced work force, individual people have a variety of valuable skills, experience and knowledge, which they can contribute to an organisation (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 1995, p. 12; Stevens, Plaut, & Sanchez-Burks, 2008, p. 129; Thomas & Ely, 1996, p. 11). These skills are further enhanced by diversity, differences in gender, race, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation and age enhance the quality of service provided (S. Jackson, 1996, p. 59; Kochan, et al., 2003, p. 29). A further consideration is that of the complex, diverse nature of communities, in order to fully understand their needs the police organisation should also be diverse. Employing individuals from different backgrounds allows an organisation to gain a greater understanding of culture, particularly in terms of lifestyles and needs (Lonsway, et al., 2002, p. 3). The consequence of this is greater efficiency, enhanced problem solving and improvements in the levels of trust and confidence between the police and the community (Avon and Somerset Constabulary, 2010; Elfenbein & O'Reilly, 2007, p. 110; West Midlands Police, n.d.).

Women make up 51% of the general population but they only represent 29% of the police workforce subject of this research. Therefore in order to truly reflect communities, the police organisation should have a comparative number of female officers (Home Office, 2008b). Lonsway et al suggest that the recruitment of more female officers 'has never been more urgent' given the difficulties encountered by modern day police forces (2002, p. 3), clearly this remains an issue. Research into the police organisation is essential in maintaining professionalism, credibility and accountability (J. Brown, 1996a, p. 177).

Insider/Outsider

There are different types of researchers who may be identified according to their position. Those individuals who work within the police organisation, 'insiders' and those who are external, 'outsiders', both may choose to explore critical issues from different perspectives however one may support the other (Sheptycki, 1994, p. 131). Brown suggests that as the external interest into police culture increased, hostility developed between the two (1996a, p. 178). Insiders can also become outsiders, examples being Holdaway, Waddington and Young, ex-police officers who have an inside knowledge of the police organisation but are now eminent academics (J. Brown, 1996a, p. 180).

External researchers investigating police culture may have difficulty obtaining authentic data (J. Brown & Waters, 1993, p. 325) conversely internal police researchers may be constrained by their own organisational position. This may cause considerable conflict, place significant restraints on their findings and even lead to bias whilst conducting the research or writing up the results (J. Brown, 1996a, p. 183; Sheptycki, 1994, p. 127). Weatheritt describes an insider's perspective as being limited to the evaluation of pre-existing conditions with the desired outcome already a 'foregone conclusion' (1986, p. 19). However they are in a privileged position which may provide them with easier access to information (J. Brown, 1996a, p. 180).

In undertaking this research I recognise that I am an insider-outsider. I am an insider on three levels, as a police officer, as a woman and as someone who has suffered from pervasive sexism. Consequently I have first hand experience of the culture within the organisation. Conversely I am also an outsider as I am not a firearms officer.

I joined the Police in 1985, as a 21-year-old female with limited life experience. I was issued with my uniform, which included skirts: female officers were not issued with trousers, although you could have culottes. I was also issued with a handbag in which to carry my miniature truncheon. Following a week's initial induction, I attended a 15-week residential training course at the national police-training centre near Coventry. I was taught basic law, powers of arrest, first aid and personal safety skills. I was also subjected to daily uniform inspections and drill. Throughout the 15 weeks, myself and other female colleagues were constantly told by the drill sergeant that we were second-class citizens and lucky to be there. This constant chauvinism strengthened my resolve to get through the intensive training programme. I was then posted to a busy City Centre as a uniform constable. I was one of only three female officers on a shift of over 30 officers. I successfully completed my two-year probationary period despite encountering pervasive sexism and sexual harassment on a daily basis.

In the early part of my career, as a uniformed officer, I was regularly deployed to deal with offences relating to women and children. I was frequently required to 'babysit' young children whilst my male colleagues dealt with their parents in the custody suite. This was despite the fact that I had no children of my own at the time and no experience of looking after children. It was assumed by my male supervisors that I had a natural, maternal instinct and would be more capable of looking after children than my male colleagues who had children of their own. I was often subjected to sexual harassment in the form of lewd comments from male colleagues, most of who were married with children. In my experience these sexist attitudes have moved on, women are no longer subjected to such blatant harassment or bigoted treatment.

Throughout my career I have specialised in a variety of departments including, accident investigation, case preparation, child protection, domestic abuse and training. Two years ago I was promoted to the rank of Sergeant

and moved to my current post as supervisor on a neighbourhood team based at a busy international airport.

At the commencement of this course of study my position within the organisation was that of trainer within the Operations Department. As such I had considerable involvement with the senior leadership team; I regularly attended senior management meetings with regards to diversity and had involvement with a number of positive action initiatives to increase female representation within specialist units. I assisted with the development and organisation of a number of open days across the force to promote the department. We also created a list of mentors to ensure support for female officers expressing an interest in joining. I was aware of the previous research which had been conducted within the organisation and the findings which suggested female officers were interested in joining the Operations Department however they felt it was elitist and difficult to get into (Andronicou, 2007; Gibling & Hirst, 2007). There were also concerns with regards to the level of fitness required to access some specialist units, particularly firearms.

I discussed the focus of my research with my senior managers; we were particularly interested in the under-representation of female officers within the Operations Department. However the sample group for the whole of the Operations Department was too extensive given the time frame of the research therefore the research was limited to one particular area. Having considered all specialist units within the Operations Department I chose the unit which appeared to have retained a particularly machismo image, and was significantly under-represented by female officers, namely the firearms unit. My personal experience of the police organisation suggests that policing has changed however the image of firearms remains unchanged. In my opinion, the organisation has evolved in terms of attitudes towards women however the external perceptions of the firearms unit suggests it has changed very little since its inception in the 1980's. Since undertaking the research my role

and rank have both changed however I have continued to receive the full support of my management team and consider the research will remain vital towards assisting the police organisation achieve a more equally balanced gender distribution.

As a practitioner-researcher I have had to find a healthy balance between work, home and studies, this has not always been easy, however excellent time management and organisational skills have proved invaluable in assisting me to complete this task (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007, p. 124). In completing this research I gave full consideration to the personal dangers with regards to my own development however this was not felt to be an issue due to my length of service and the support received from the senior management team.

Bartunek and Louis suggest that as an insider-outsider conducting the research I will already have a view of my own working environment which may be contrary to that of an outsider-insider conducting the research (1996, p. 1). I am mindful that it is suggested by some researchers that my views may be tainted by my existing knowledge thereby influencing the quality of information, which is subsequently obtained from my research. Conversely as an insider-outsider I have privileged access to information (Sheptycki, 1994, p. 129), staff and resources which may otherwise be restricted or closed to outsider-insider researcher. I also have the inside knowledge of current issues and a pre-existing relationship of trust with staff who will be involved in the research. Egan refers to the 'shadow side' of an organisation, another dimension which needs to be understood and suggests that practitioner researchers are able to delve much deeper into the hidden, prohibited areas which are not easily observed or understood by the external researcher (1994, p. 4).

Case study

My methodological approach to this research was a case study. Yin suggests a case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (1984, p. 23). A case study is an intensive examination of an existing conundrum that has to be resolved by analysing an individual person, group or event. It provides an opportunity to obtain a unique insight into a person or group of people, usually by the collation of qualitative data (Robson, 2002, p. 57; Simons, 1996, p. 225). This method was selected as it provides a systematic way of looking at events, collating data, analysing results and reporting on the results. As the intention of this research was to explore the cultural dynamics of a firearms unit, a case study was deemed to be the most appropriate methodology for the exploration of personal experiences, attitudes and values.

Robson suggests there are four stages to designing a case study; developing a conceptual framework, formulation of research questions, a sampling strategy and finally the methods for data collection (2002, p. 150). The conceptual framework provides clear direction and focus, giving the researcher an opportunity to identify specific variables and factors that are thought to be important elements for exploration. However it is vital that this framework remains flexible in order to prevent bias.

My initial considerations in the research design were to identify the specific areas to focus my research. I developed a conceptual framework in order to specifically identify the important areas for examination, the data to be collected and subsequently analysed. I determined the research questions which were; to consider the under representation of women, to consider the

motivations for joining a specialist policing department and also to gain an understanding of the working environment of firearms officers. I then had to select my sample group and determine the most appropriate data gathering technique, which I considered to be semi-structured interviews. I made arrangements to collect the data and subsequently evaluated it. This case study explores the experiences of the sample group of male and female firearms officers in order to identify underlying principles and behaviours to gain an appreciation of their uniqueness and complexity (Stake, 1995, p. 16).

I rejected other types and methods of data collection such as experimental, phenomenology, ethnography, ethnomethodology, action research etc as not being suitable. Experimental research as a methodology was not practicable. I would not be able to impose the different experimental conditions required for the research, i.e. officers working within the firearms department. Due to the specialist nature of the role, only those police officers that have undertaken a rigorous selection and training procedure are eligible to carry a firearm.

Ethnomethodology is the analysis of conversations, the use of language, focus on social practices and interactions, therefore deemed unsuitable for use within this research. Phenomenological research aims to develop a single theory from an experience; my intention is to consider the individual experiences of police officers working within the firearms department in order to develop a clear description and understanding of their experience, not to put that experience into a single theory or category. A longitudinal study was also ruled out, again, due to the time constraints of the research.

Action research can be divided into four main stages: a review of current practices, implementation of a change process, followed by an evaluation and recommendations for long-term solutions. Reflection is involved at every

stage. This was deemed not to be appropriate given the nature of the research topic. It may be possible to complete the first stage i.e. identify the current situation however there was insufficient time to implement new strategies, review and evaluate them effectively.

Political and ethical issues often influence research in the area of criminal justice. Researchers can find they encounter problems when their research is finalised and ready for publication. The Operations Department have supported my research by part-funding my university course, facilitating access to resources and discussing the direction of research. The department has a vested interest in the outcome of this research however this can be perceived by some as an added burden, feeling under pressure to produce a positive outcome. This may result in an attempt to manipulate or disguise any negative results in order to achieve a favourable outcome (Noaks & Wincup, 2004, p. 159). I am conscious of the expectations of my Senior Managers and will ensure the facts are reported fully and honestly, whatever the overall results, thus creating a credible piece of research which, may be beneficial to the department and the Organisation.

Qualitative-v-Quantitative research methods

Research methods are generally categorised as being either qualitative or quantitative (Robson, 2002, p. 303). Traditionally, quantitative data provides internal and external validity to research, objectivity and reliability. Alternatively qualitative data is said to have credibility, transferability, dependability and confirm-ability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24). Qualitative methods usually involve personal interaction with people by way of interviews, focus groups or observation (Pope & Mays, 1995). Quantitative methods are generally more impersonal and usually involve surveys or questionnaires (Paul Vogt, 2007, p. 76).

In simplistic terms, qualitative data is the collation of words, exploration and interpretation of personal experiences with the overall goal being to gain an understanding of the participants' personal, 'real life' views (J. Smith, 2008, p. 2). Whilst quantitative data can be described as the collection of numbers in order to find facts and causes (Ratcliff, 2010). It is often said that qualitative and quantitative approaches are opposing and therefore incompatible 'Like water and oil, they do not mix' (Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p. 111). Quantitative researchers are said to consider the problem from a positivist paradigm whilst qualitative researchers on the other hand are said to be interpretive, having a naturalist paradigm. Some researchers argue that they can be used simultaneously (Patton, 2002, p. 253; Ratcliff, 2010). Rubin and Rubin argue that 'boiling down answers into numbers strips away the context, losing much of the richness and complexity that make research realistic' (2005, p. 2).

Questionnaires have previously been utilised to accumulate quantitative and qualitative data from female officers within the force regarding their attitudes towards specialist departments. This research is an opportunity to expand on the previous findings in greater depth. I have therefore decided to utilise qualitative data collection in the form of interviews. This method is ideally suited to obtain detailed, in-depth responses in order to fully explore the individual experiences of officers in the sample group to gain a greater appreciation of the role, training and experiences of working within a specialist unit (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 13).

Sample group

It was my intention to conduct a total of 20 semi-structured interviews with an equal number of male and female firearms officers from one metropolitan police force. However an additional male officer was added to the sample towards the end of the interview process due to comments made by one of

the participants, bringing the total number of interviews to 21, 10 female officers and 11 male. At the time of completing this research those officers who were working within the firearms unit of the Operations Department of the chosen force were considered specialist firearms officers. I acknowledge that this particular force's definition of an SFO is different to the recently approved definition of common minimum standards for firearms officers published by the ACPO Armed Policing Secretariat. However it was the officer's experience of working within this unit that was of interest to me.

A detailed establishment list of firearms officers was obtained from the personnel department at the force head quarters. This provided me with a list of 134 specialist firearms officers, which included their names, gender, age, rank and length of service. One of the biggest problems that I encountered was in fact finding a sufficient number of female firearms officers to interview. The list of specialist firearms officers included two female officers who had recently transferred into other units within the Operations Department and had not completed their training. In total there were 9 female officers, one non-operational firearms Inspector, one operational sergeant and 5 operational PC's. Given the limited number of female officers available the sample included all 6 of the existing female specialist firearms officers (SFO's), one non-operational inspectors, two female officers who were successful on application but not fully completed the training and also one female senior officer who had previously worked within the department, giving a total of ten female officers. A matched sample of policemen was then drawn from the 97 specialist firearms officers in terms of their rank, length of service and age. The majority (17) of the sample group were current firearms officers therefore their view of the selection process is more likely to be positive as they were successful in their goal. The remaining officers consisted of one AFO currently continuing with her training, one officer left during her selection course and returned to uniform duties and the two non-operational managers have returned to uniform duties.

In preparing, engaging and completing this research I was aware of the ethical implications. I consulted the Code of Ethics for researchers in the field of criminology (British Society of Criminology, 2011). I was mindful of my responsibilities to ensure the physical, social and psychological well being of all participants throughout. They were initially contacted by e-mail. I provided a detailed outline of the objectives of the research. I assured them of privacy and confidentiality. I explained that the interviews would be tape-recorded however the results would be written up anonymously anything, which could only be attributable to one individual, would not be used. I obtained full written consent from all participants.

Semi-structured interviews

I conducted my research utilising semi-structured interviews, which provided me with a detailed, usable record of several conversations. The interviews were an opportunity to obtain rich, illuminating information by talking and listening intently to participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 2). Interviews are a 'conversation with a purpose' (Robson, 2002, p. 228), thereby giving me the chance to discuss the research topic with a number of chosen individuals in order to identify key themes and look for commonality amongst the interviewees.

There are disadvantages to this methodology, which includes the fact that the interview can be time consuming and costly, the interviewee may not be truthful and only say what they believe the interviewer wants to hear. Seniority or position may have an impact on responses. Interviews are more time consuming than questionnaires, each interview can take several hours and will need to be accurately recorded and transcribed, whereas questionnaires can be completed independently and anonymously. However it was felt that the depth of exploration provided by an interview was

necessary to ensure the research questions were fully explored. An interview provides less anonymity than a survey; therefore participation can be an issue (Robson, 2002, p. 329).

I was particularly conscious of the fact that the style of questions and the way I asked them could have an effect on the results. Stake suggests a good quality case study relies on the formulation of first-rate questions which have been designed to focus the direction of the research sufficiently to obtain a greater understanding of the case (1995, p. 15). I was also aware that any bias, which I may have felt towards the research topic, the interviewee or the organisation, could have an affect the interviewee and/or the results. I avoided the use of closed, leading or double-barrelled questions and utilised open and probing questions. I was careful to avoid any mistakes when asking the questions or recording or transcribing the answers. Many of the difficulties with interviews as a methodology rest with the quality, integrity and skill of the interviewer (Hagan, 1982, p. 168). The interviewer requires good listening and communication skills, adapting the interview schedule to follow relevant responses but also keeping the interview on track. As an experienced police officer I feel I have the necessary skills to complete competent interviews. Research interviews are not the same as suspect or witness interviews however the principles and skills required are transferable.

Preparation of the interview schedule can be time consuming however this is essential to ensure the questions remain relevant. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow flexibility in my approach but with a basic structure of key questions. The questions were chosen to consider the transition from police officer to firearms officer, their motivations for joining and gain an understanding of their working environment. The participants were given every opportunity to articulate their experiences with regards to their firearms training, and actual experience of working as a firearms officer.

I was conscious of the fact that my gender may have an impact on the outcome of the interview, women are said to be able to build a better rapport with participants due to their less threatening quality and enhanced communication skills (Warren, 1988, p. 44). The interviewee may not be aware of the impact of the gender of the interviewer however research suggests women are able to speak more freely regarding sensitive topics when being interviewed by a woman but male firearms officers may have felt differently. Research by Padfield and Procter identified a difference between the information volunteered to female interviewers but found no difference when responding to direct questions by either male or female interviewers (1996, p. 360). Therefore as a female interviewer I may be in a position to obtain more detailed information from the interviews.

In order for my research to be of value to the organisation, Fox, Martin and Green suggest a framework which considers the value of qualitative research in terms of trustworthiness and validity (2007, p. 18). Accurate collation of data is vital to ensure descriptive validity. Allowing the data to emerge from the analysis of the interview transcripts will ensure interpretative validity. Honest reflection of the key findings by not allowing the data to be distorted in any way, in particular, by my own views or opinions will also ensure it is valid.

It was vital to build a rapport and create a friendly diplomatic atmosphere from the very start of the process. My initial contact was via personal e-mail to the identified members of staff outlining the purpose of the research and the reason for the request to interview them. In order to maintain confidentiality I ensured I sent individual e-mails rather than one addressed to all 21 participants. The correspondence indicated that participation in the research was completely voluntary and results would be confidential and anonymous. The purpose of the study was specified as fulfilling the requirements of a Professional Doctorate in Criminal Justice, which was fully supported by the Force.

I received positive responses from all individuals without any delay, all 21 officers contacted agreed to assist with my research (100% response rate). I subsequently sent a further e-mail requesting availability and made telephone calls to arrange suitable times and locations for the interviews. As a practitioner researcher I am in a privileged position, due to my previous role as a trainer, I am known by the majority of the participants and feel that this was a huge benefit in obtaining their co-operation. It was anticipated that the research data would be collected over a 5-month period between May and September 2010. Shift work and holidays had an impact on availability of participants therefore this process was extended slightly, the final interview was completed in November 2010, a total of eight months. However due to the flexibility and co-operation of all participants this did not pose too much difficulty. Two of the interviews were delayed, one due to sickness and the other due to the extensive planning and preparation for a VIP visit to one of the major Cities within the force area.

I made arrangements to see the individuals either at their place of work or mine, depending on their preference. I always allocated sufficient time and booked a room whenever possible to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Time management is vital to ensuring the interview schedule is maintained. One also needs to be able to deal with an interviewee who wants to continue to talk beyond the realms of the research. Diplomacy is the key to keeping the interview on track or closing the interview without offending the participant. This was particularly problematic when asking the participants to talk about their personal experiences.

I decided to digitally record the interviews to ensure an accurate record of the conversation. At the commencement of each interview I obtained verbal consent to record the conversation. I outlined the purpose of the research, the basic structure of the interview and assured the participants of complete confidentiality and anonymity. In order to put them at ease the first question

asked them to describe their police career to date. I was mindful of the fact that this opening question was designed to make participants feel comfortable therefore I did not generally interrupt or stop them from talking.

The interviewees were encouraged to talk freely in response to a set number of carefully constructed questions (appendix D). The literature review enabled me to make an informed decision regarding the most appropriate areas to concentrate my research questions. They were specifically chosen to address the research questions: consider the under-representation of women, consider the motivations for joining and gain an understanding of the working environment of firearms officers.

The questions began with a summary of their police career to date. This was an introductory question to settle them into the interview and put them at ease. They were asked to describe their application/recruitment process, their rationale for joining the department, the training programme and also their personal experiences within the firearms unit. Some of the participants interviewed were also firearms instructors; they were asked additional questions relating to the ethos of the training department (appendix E). Their responses were probed by spontaneous follow up questions to ensure full exploration of their answers to provide depth and detail to the research. I conducted a total of 21 interviews, with eleven male and ten female participants gathering in excess of twenty hours of data. At the conclusion of the interview participants were thanked for their participation and co-operation. I also offered them access to a copy of the final report should they wish to read it.

Memo writing was used at each stage to assist with the collation and analysis of data, focusing the direction of subsequent interviews by capturing my thoughts and views with regards to the data. After each interview I was able

to listen to the recording and make appropriate notes that summarised the salient points, thus identifying the initial code words and phrases.

The interviews were digitally recorded. The main benefits of a recorded interview are: an accurate record of the conversation, which is able to flow more freely, there is no need for the interviewee to wait or pause whilst answering the questions and the interviewee is only detained for a limited period of time. The actual length of the interview may impact on the number of volunteers willing to participate in the research (Robson, 2002, p. 229) therefore my interview plan allowed an hour for each interview. All participants were asked a standard set of questions however due to the fact that the interview was only partially structured thus allowing flexibility for follow up questions, the interviews varied in length. The shortest lasted for 32 minutes whilst two of the interviews were considerably longer, lasting for 74 minutes and 97 minutes, this was due to the extensive experience of the officers being interviewed and their willingness to share the information. The average length of time for the interviews was 57 minutes.

The interview transcripts were particularly problematic due to the length of the interviews. I personally transcribed the first interview, which took 3 days. Transcribing 21 interviews would have taken over two months: I did not have sufficient capacity to transcribe all of the interviews. Therefore I instigated the assistance of a number of professional typists within the organisation who regularly transcribe tape-recorded interviews. However the interviews had been digitally recorded and the police transcribers are only equipped to transcribe interview tapes. I contacted the police 'high tech crime unit' who were able to provide me with the necessary equipment to transfer the digital recordings onto cassette tapes. Two of the interviews were conducted within a canteen area, where there was a small degree of background noise. The digital recording of both interviews was clear however once transferred onto a tape the quality was significantly reduced, thus hindering the transcription,

this resulted in a slight delay. All 21 interviews were subsequently transcribed verbatim each one took approximately 4 – 5 hours. I personally checked each typed transcript to ensure accuracy. The interview transcripts were systematically numbered P1 to P21.

I examined the raw data by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts several times to identify relevant information, looking for similarities and links between the research outcomes and the original questions. Qualitative coding was utilised to assist with the processing of information by simultaneously reducing the data into manageable units of analysis (Charmez, 2010, p. 43). The codes were used to compare data with data, from one interview to another, constantly looking for similarities. Initially question-by-question coding was used, carefully examining the responses to discover patterns. An important element of initial coding for me as a practitioner-researcher was the opportunity to view the data with untainted eyes, giving me a chance to view the information with an open mind, thus removing any potential bias.

Following the initial coding, I utilised ‘focused coding’ to select the most significant codes established in the initial coding. This enabled a more direct and comprehensive sifting of the data. Charmez suggests focused coding is “used to make the most analytic sense to categorise data incisively and completely” (2010, p. 57). These themes brought together the different experiences of the participants thus identifying common topics. By analysing the ‘focused coding’ I was able to elaborate the themes into a number of comprehensive data categories, which subsequently became my main topics. By using focused coding and memos I was able to conduct a comprehensive comparison of the interviews; by searching the transcripts for pertinent data I was able to elaborate the themes into a number of comprehensive data categories.

This chapter has outlined the methodology, which has enabled me to conduct a detailed piece of research relating to the personal experiences of a small sample group of male and female firearms officers. The sample group was carefully selected to ensure an equal balance of male and female officers. This gender division was vital to ensure the aim of the research was achieved, to examine the cultural dynamics of a specialist police department with a particular focus on gender. The following chapter will examine the results of the semi-structured interviews conducted with the selected sample group.

Chapter five – Results I: pre-joining and joining the firearms unit

This chapter will begin to explore the results of this research. I initially analysed the results by gender but then broke them down into the most important themes that emerged. The carefully chosen group of participants were selected to ensure an equal balance of gender to address the research question, seeking the opinions of male and female officers was fundamental to the research question. However due to the limited number of female officers available it was necessary to utilise them all and a matched sample of male officers was chosen. Semi structured interviews were conducted with the sample group, digitally recorded and subsequently fully transcribed.

The interview questions were designed to consider the individual experiences of each officer throughout every stage of their firearms career: from initial application, selection training, through to their personal experiences of working within the firearms unit. The interviews were transcribed and the results were examined extensively for key themes. The themes that emerged were divided into two clear areas, those that centred around their pre-joining experiences and subsequently the reality of life on the unit. This chapter will explore their pre joining experiences, which includes the application process, training, fitness and their personal motivations for becoming a firearms officer.

The majority of the officers interviewed were successful applicants, 8 female and 11 male, two female managers were posted to the unit and did not actually go through the application process. Most of the participants were current firearms officers who had been successful throughout the selection process, although one female PC had not fully completed her training and another had only partially completed the selection course before deciding to withdraw. With the exception of two female managers, the fact that the majority of the officers involved in this research were all successful

candidates may have been a contributing factor to the positive results. Throughout the interviews the officers demonstrated an overwhelming positivity and enthusiasm towards their role.

It was interesting to consider the length of service and previous experiences of the officers in the sample group. The length of service of the participants varied significantly from 6.5 years to 24 years, the average being 14 years service. The actual length of time spent in the firearms unit ranged from 0 years to 10 years, the average being 3 years. The age range of the participants was between 28 and 46 years, the average being 36 years. Six of the participants were ex-forces, 2 female and 4 male. Four were dual role, specialist firearms officers and also full time instructors on the firearms unit. All officers have spent some time on both response and neighbourhood policing to varying degrees. Most had the opportunity to diversify into a different specialist role prior to joining the firearms unit however there were some individuals who joined the police service with the sole intention of becoming a firearms officer. Five of the participants had spent some time on the CID, other chosen specialism's included: guns and gangs team, Operational Support Unit (OSU), surveillance (SSU), vehicle and robbery team, section action team (SAT), training, child protection, burglary team, cycle team. The officers have a variety of previous experience with a small minority of officers applying to join the unit immediately upon completing their two-year probationary period.

Application Process

The standard application process for any vacancy within the chosen police force is that of published advert on the force intranet system outlining the job description, number of vacancies, competencies required for the role, selection procedure, and closing date for applications. All applicants are

required to complete a detailed application form which must be signed by their line manager and department head, submitted to the personnel department together with a copy of their last two performance development reviews (PDR's). Firearms are no different in that respect however a consistent theme throughout the discussion regarding recruitment was the length of time the whole process took, the majority of participants described this as a particularly prolonged procedure. Those who managed to complete the process within a twelve-month timescale felt they had been 'lucky'.

All participants were asked to describe the recruitment process: although the initial written application process has remained constant for all applicants the selection procedure has changed several times over the past years. The process starts with the submission of a written application form, endorsed by their supervisor and head of department. The application forms were then paper sifted and successful applicants were then invited to attend a psychometric test (PF16), medical including eyesight and hearing, plus a fitness test. The majority of participants did not comment further on the psychometric test merely that they had to complete it. One officer described it as "the mad test" (P9), another suggested it was proof of his sanity (P14) and two other participants described it as peculiar.

There has always been a fitness test to join the firearms department however the content of the test has evolved over the years. All participants in this study completed a fitness test but there were differences depending on their date of joining the unit. The NPIA have recently introduced a national standardised fitness test for firearms officers, which is a bleep test. This is the most radical change to the firearms fitness test and has recently been adopted by the force subject of this research. All firearms officers in the chosen force are now required to pass this fitness test on selection and also on an annual basis. However as part of the selection procedure for the officers who participated in this study they were required to pass a fitness test

which involved a degree of cardio and strength testing. Once the applicants had successfully completed the fitness test they were eligible to progress to the next stage of firearms training.

Training

Extensive firearms training involves not only technical training to ensure competency in weapons handling but also physical and psychological elements to ensure officers are suitably equipped to carry out their role. The actual preparation to become a specialist firearms officer (SFO) starts with a one-week basic handgun course. During this week the officers are introduced to the handgun, a Beretta, which is a self-loading pistol. They are provided with an opportunity to handle the weapons to familiarise themselves with the component parts by stripping the weapon down, cleaning it and reassembling it. They are given instruction on how to shoot the handgun and identify which is their dominant eye. At the end of the week they are required to pass a qualification shoot which is 80%, 40 out of 50 shots. Again this has changed; some officers longer in service were required to shoot 45 out of 50 shots, 90%.

Once an officer has successfully completed their handgun course they are permitted to progress to the next phase, which is the 15-day basic firearms course or initial tactical module (ITM). The first week introduces the MP5, a large rifle that fires a 9mm automatic round this is classed as their primary weapon. Again, as with the handgun, officers are taught basic weapons handling of this gun, how to strip it down, clean it, reassemble and shoot it. The qualification shoot for the rifle is 90%. The officers are then taught basic containment skills, arrest, search techniques and given instruction on how to deal with people with knives and guns. The officers are subjected to scenario

style training to test their judgement, reactions and decision-making capabilities.

Progression from one stage to the next was considered by those interviewed, as an achievement in itself. Failure at any stage could result in a return to uniform policing with little or no chance of re-applying. The number of applicants was considerably higher than the number of successful candidates. The process has an extremely high failure rate, described by one participant as a pyramid:

“You start off with hundreds of people, they get rid of loads at stage one, next stage, any second you’re just off and you end up getting to the point on this pyramid where loads and loads of people you’ve been through courses with are not there any more and then the last few get through at the end” (P17).

“At every stage I just remember it normally being about 50% would pass at each stage” (P7).

The most rigorous part of the firearms training appeared to be the selection course, this part of the training varied in length. It included a 5-day residential training programme at Catterick or a 3-day programme at Swinnerton army barracks. Based on SAS military style training, it included excessive physical fitness, sleep deprivation and stress shoots. The experience was described by many of the participants as ‘horrendous’:

“It was a 3 week selection process at that time, 2 weeks teach, 1 horrible week I never want to repeat in my life, selection, which was probably the worst and the best thing I’ve done” (P1).

“You look back and think it was really enjoyable, but at the time it wasn’t. Basically it was they would teach you, but as they’re teaching you they’re beasting the hell out of you, cause it was more or less along the lines of how much do you really want to be on this Unit, how much are you not prepared to give up, how tired you are, so it was how determined you are really as a person, and I think that was why all the personalities on here are very strong because that’s the sort of people it encouraged forward ” (P4).

“Misery, it was misery, 2 weeks of absolute misery. Looking back on it, the same as anything hard, it’s worth doing and it was hard to do, but it was great, they just beasted me for 2 weeks solid and that was the thing I loved” (P5).

“I remember having to break the ice on some of the pools of water that they’d put us in to do our PT, sit ups, press ups, whatever. Bitterly cold, literally take your breath away cold” (P10).

“Horrible, it’s horrible. Just the way, you’re under the microscope constantly, it’s not like doing an interview or an exam where you might have an hour or two of stress, or a driving test, its 24 hours a day, you’re tired, physically knackered, pissed off, hungry, You’re still thinking about the mistake you made on the last thing when you’re doing the next job. Its self induced pressure, no ones hitting you, no ones torturing you, at any time you can leave which almost makes it worse, because you think I can’t because you think the shame of it if I did, you couldn’t, you’ve built yourself up to it for so long, you’ve got to give it a go and that’s all it is. The actual tasks that are set for you aren’t that hard, but when you are really shattered and its dark and you’re soaked through and you’re pissed off, you can’t pretend” (P17).

The approach to this training course was excessive physical exertion, often described by the interviewee’s as ‘beastings’. Throughout the week officers lived in their kit, they even slept in it, as they were often called out in the middle of the night. Some officers had to discard items of uniform which were completely ruined by the Catterick experience:

“We haven’t slept for 27 hours, we haven’t showered, we’ve eaten Mars bars, we’re still in the same kit that we were in Sunday night and it was now Wednesday morning. You daren’t get changed into other kit because at any minute you could get called, which we did, and then it would be a case of downstairs in 6 minutes” (P10).

The majority of participants acknowledged the necessity of the excessive physical exercise. Clearly the instructors were not permitted to aim a loaded or even unloaded gun at the officers. Therefore they accepted physical exercise was the only way to stimulate your heart in order to simulate your reactions when someone points a loaded gun at you. The level of exercise expected from each officer was individual and unique to him or her. All of the officers interviewed suggested this was fair, as each person was pushed to their personal limit in terms of physical capabilities:

“They won’t say everybody has to run 4 miles, it will be everybody has to run until they drop, so if that’s only 1 mile for everybody, then that’s as far as you run. If somebody is out performing, it just meant they run backwards and forwards until they’re in the same boat as everybody else and then you do the scenario” (P1).

“I always said it was totally unnecessary we’re not training the SAS or anything but I’d rather go through that as a test than find out the day I get shot at that the bloke I’m with is a Looney and just runs or starts blasting rounds off everywhere” (P17).

A number of officers expressed concerns regarding the ability to prepare for the selection course. They explained that it was a particularly difficult course to train for, as they were never really told what was involved and therefore did not know what to expect. A number of interviewees commented that the established firearms officers took pleasure in sharing their experiences, including greatly embellished accounts of their horrendous training and trainers. This relates back to the characteristic of storytelling, which I will discuss further in chapter seven.

The physical exertion on this course started immediately, even before the actual arrival at the barracks. The personnel carrier purportedly broke down half way up the hill, the officers were required to push the van the rest of the way to the site, and so began the rigorous training regime to test the officers' strength of character and endurance. Upon arrival at the barracks the officers would immediately be deployed to a firearms incident. The physical fitness involved a vast array of exercises, including running several miles carrying a bench or a large tyre. These physical challenges were designed to fatigue the officers to complete exhaustion. Some officers described the activities on the selection course in detail:

"I guess they strip you bare, strip your soul bare to see what sort of a person you are when you're facing the toughest elements that they can give you" (P2).

"Having to run and drag things, sit ups, press ups, squats, different weights and different things and it was quite like, oh my God I'm gonna die" (P3).

Part of the training involved the psychological testing of officers. Many of the tactics used on the selection course were based on military, SAS style training. Sleep deprivation was a major factor, utilised to ensure the officers were tested to the ultimate level. One officer describes getting five hours sleep in the entire week another suggests they were one of the lucky ones getting eleven hours sleep. Sensory deprivation was also involved, one scenario required officers to be blindfolded, locked inside a small room with headphones on, after several hours they were released and expected to deal with a scenario. Only one participant described this element of the course in detail, which was rather surprising, as it sounds particularly horrendous. Another significant element of the psychological training included the constant negativity from the instructional staff:

“You were always told that you were rubbish, so you never actually knew whether or not you were doing it right or not” (P7).

“Finger pointing and lots of shouting, you’re all rubbish, sort of thing. I prefer that method of training, cause if I’m crap the first thing to say is you’re crap, as opposed to saying yeah we can work on that, cause deep down inside people are thinking you are still crap, but they just don’t say it” (P4).

The officers felt a tremendous sense of achievement in completing this course due to the extreme physical activity and level of difficulty. The selection course was something which participants felt extremely proud and privileged to have participated in. “The old style selection was something really to be proud of to pass. There appeared to be a definite kudos which accompanied the old selection (P16)”. However none of the officers interviewed would voluntarily repeat the experience.

All applicants to the firearms unit are experienced officers with a minimum of two years service, often much more. Generally this experience leads to a high degree of self-confidence and generates respect from colleagues. One officer suggested that they had observed occasions when colleagues had difficulty integrating within the firearms unit due to their self-confidence. The trainee firearms officers were generally treated like complete novices: similar to how a probationary constable was treated when they first joined the organisation, but 30 years ago. Several of the officers interviewed described how the full time firearms officers had treated them when they first arrived at the unit. They explained that the existing officers did not associate with them, choosing to completely ignore them:

“We didn’t have a lot to do with them, some would completely ignore you, and some wouldn’t have anything to do with you at all. We couldn’t sit at the table, they had a main table in the crew room it would be chairs around the outside. Cos if you did sit there, you would get the look, or a

comment or, you know, somebody would say something about, you're fresh out of the box, you're new here, you go in the corner or you sit over there" (P10).

"Being the new person, you're not spoken to that much, you're not are you? I don't know, you've got to prove yourself haven't you? It's the same in any sort of department: if you're new you have to prove yourself a little bit. Your place is the armoury making the tea. I was fine with that" (P21).

Other officers have described how they were not even allowed to sit in the same crew room to eat their lunch. This is a clear example of the in-group/out-group distinctions, which were apparent in the department: this will be discussed further in chapter seven. Several officers depict a change in attitudes over the years and suggest that this type of behaviour, generally, no longer exists. It was recognised that the longer in service firearms officers, the 'older generation', have been known to ignore new recruits, however most people who are currently in the firearms unit are described as being 'very friendly'. One officer suggested the rationale for this aloof behaviour was perhaps due to the high failure rate:

"Why make friends with loads of people when you know that 60, 70 80 percent of them are not gonna be there in a couple of weeks. It's almost like they can't be bothered to invest in building a relationship with someone because the chances are that person probably won't be there" (P17).

The acceptance within the firearms unit from the older, more established officers appears to start on completion of the standard training. It is at this stage that the individual becomes part of the team, someone who they may need to rely on at a firearms incident:

“A comrade rather than a passing acquaintance”. “It’s like you’ve got your wings, and you’ve joined the club. It doesn’t matter how much service you’ve got, it’s the same bullets coming towards you and you can’t pick and choose who you work with” (P17).

The officers interviewed believe they are provided with a high level of training for their role. Historically this was based on military style training: there were no lesson plans, no performance criteria and no feedback to aid development. The instructors made their final decision based on individual, personal opinion, which often involved how well they felt an officer had been able to fit into the unit, ‘if your face fits’. The PC’s often had more power than the Inspectors, described by one officer as “the tail wagging the dog” (P20). The instructors were extremely powerful as they held officers’ careers in their hands. In recent years there have been significant changes in relation to firearms training. Four of the officers interviewed were dual role, operational firearms officers and also instructors. It was apparent that the NPIA have introduced a national competency framework with set performance criteria. All instructors are required to follow written lesson plans, with clear objectives. Some officers commented on the changes, describing the teaching and coaching aspect of the training followed by assessment:

“The department has changed, it’s more supportive, you can ask questions without being made to feel stupid, even the older trainers have taken on board the new regime” (P18).

The instructors’ were asked to identify the qualities they are looking for in a good firearms officer, tactical judgement, and personal safety awareness, safety of others and safe handling of weapons were key competencies. One instructor (P18) suggested enthusiasm for the role was essential together with organisational skills to ensure they are always prepared to carry out their responsibilities. The performance criteria are strictly applied therefore if an officer demonstrates their competency they will pass unlike the previous

regime, 'if your face fits'. One instructor (P13) described the current training as the best there has ever been. The necessity for interoperability and joint working, particularly surrounding the UK 2012 Olympic Games, has ensured firearms training has evolved. The department has recently appointed a female instructor to the training team.

Training was an area that caused a number of officers varying degrees of trepidation. One officer described the training environment as a place to fear rather than a place to learn (P12). Although this respondent was female it was not felt that the comments related to her gender. Historically she felt the training environment had been unsupportive, it was an opportunity for the trainers to ridicule and humiliate the trainees, regardless of gender. It was suggested by some officers that historically the performance criteria was based on personality. There was a general rule with regards to the necessary qualities required to 'fit-in'. It has been implied that being able to have a laugh and participate in excessive physical training are important factors that enable officers to gain acceptance. The following responses are two examples of the culture of 'fitting-in' however the issue here is not one of gender as the following quotes are from male and female officers:

"If your face fitted years ago within the Firearms, oh he's a good egg he can come on" (P1).

"You are what we want down here and I was told that from the very beginning, so your face kind of fitted if you get what I mean.... To be down there, you've got to be a good egg, so you've got to get on with everybody" (P11).

I was keen to explore if any changes had taken place within the training environment, in particular the performance criteria and general training ethos. The current assessment procedures are based on set performance criteria

taken from the national firearms manual of guidance. There are a number of specified areas: personal safety awareness, tactical awareness, safety of others, safe handling of weapons and each area is broken down further depending on the competency being assessed. Each person is marked according to the criteria:

“On your courses now, a lot of it is teach, they teach you how to do things and then there is a form of assessment at the end. The whole procedure has changed. It’s a lot fairer. It’s not easier, because they still do the fitness things, they still have you dragging a tyre around, they still put you under that physical and mental stress, but it’s a lot fairer now. They give you all the tools in the first place, then if you pick the wrong tool for the job then that’s down to you, but at least they’ve given everything they can” (P7).

Two of the managers interviewed raised concerns regarding the apparent detachment of the firearms unit from the rest of the force. There appears to be a suggestion that a large number of officers had been on the department for such a significant length of time, since the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE), in excess of 20 years, that they did not consider themselves to be regular police officers, “they’re not police officers, they’re firearms officers” (P19). This suggests that they consider themselves to be different and certainly should not be asked to put on their ‘big hats’ and deal with minor crime:

“An engrained culture that needed to be changed, because you literally had people that had been in that department pre-PACE and had never been out as a regular police officer in their entire career post PACE. They didn’t see themselves as regular cops, over 20 years. I think what it was they’d lost their core policing skills” (P20).

“I don’t think your role in firearms is to issue tickets” (P21).

This last statement is a clear example of elitism. The officer did not see it within the firearms remit to be issuing fixed penalty tickets. One of the managers discussed the resistance she had faced when trying to introduce directed patrols and also unarmed foot patrols in high crime areas consequently this was never introduced. The attitude of all participants towards training was consistent, identifying it as a necessary part of the role, even the intensive ITM course. This relates to the point by Tajfel regarding group identity, which I will discuss further in chapter seven. The excessive length of time some officers have spent on the firearms unit raises concerns with regards to the issue of tenure which was introduced in 1993 to promote equality and prevent corruption (Mundy, 1999, p. 1). However the firearms unit in this particular force has never reached its target establishment therefore the policy has not been enforced.

Fitness

There is a requirement in the ACPO manual of guidance relating to firearms officers which stipulates the Chief Constable needs to be satisfied that the officers are fit both physically and mentally to undertake the role. The overall standard of fitness within the unit is tremendously high; officers' pride themselves on being extremely fit. The fitness test has changed a number of times and has now been reduced to a standard bleep test. However the officers who participated in this research undertook a more complex physical fitness test. This consisted of a six or eight minute bleep test wearing full firearms kit and carrying both weapons. The bleep gradually increases for the first three to four minutes then remains at a constant pace for the remainder of the test. Once you have completed the bleep test you have 30 seconds rest, followed by two minutes of step-ups on a bench, this includes one minute wearing a respirator, full firearms kit and both weapons. After another short break the officers are required to complete shuttle runs, sprinting back and forth, adopting the standing, kneeling and prone positions. This is

followed by the body drag: an 80-kilogram tyre is used to simulate a body, potentially an injured colleague. The officers are required to drag the tyre across the training area, a distance of some 45 feet. Some officers who joined the department earlier were required to drag the tyre 45 feet then turn around and drag it back. However it was deemed the distance was excessive, given the urban nature of the force in question. Therefore the tyre drag was reduced to one length of the yard, 45 feet. Statistically this particular part of the course was proven to be more difficult for female applicants due to the upper body strength required. The department clearly prides itself on being extremely fit. One female officer felt that she had been readily accepted onto the unit because her fitness levels were very high. Outside hobbies had also assisted some female officers to gain acceptance, football and weight training were useful talking points:

“You might not be fit enough. Being fit down there is a major thing to people” (P11).

Previous research within the chosen force identified the fitness test as a distinct area of concern for female officers. Many of the female officers who took part in this previous survey felt they lacked the fitness levels required and felt they were unattainable therefore they would not even consider applying. The standard fitness test is usually completed within full view of the full time firearms team:

“Like grubs out of the woodwork, everybody suddenly appears in the back yard to watch” (P10).

“We do it out there in front of everybody, you know. You’ve got the glass doors and windows that everyone can see you do it” (P2).

A small minority of officers described how they were able to prepare for the fitness test unlike some aspects of firearms selection the details of the fitness

test were available prior to the assessment. This gave the candidates a transparent understanding of the standard of fitness expected. However the majority of officers indicated that their personal fitness level was already to an exceptionally high standard therefore the fitness test did not pose any problems for them:

“I prepared for it. It was the one area that I knew that I should prepare for and could prepare for. I had a good general standard of fitness anyway, I knew what was coming, I knew exactly what was required at each point of the test. Because of that, I would do my training carrying a fire extinguisher. I’d go running late at night so it was nice and dark, and I wrapped a fire extinguisher in a carrier bag, and would run carrying that because I knew I had to get used to running without the momentum of using your arms as you would on a normal run” (P10).

“I was going to the gym. Started running, doing a few weights, not really very much. But it does show you that if you want it you can do it. You just need to be dedicated to it” (P19).

“No one on this department now would fail a PT test unless they’ve got an injury, because we know the level we need to be at to get to that, so you just don’t ever let the fitness drop below it” (P2).

The fitness test is evidently an achievable target for both male and female officers. It would appear that there is a strong desire to achieve a higher standard of fitness than required to simply pass the fitness test. One female interviewee commented that some officers would actually complete their training wearing full kit to prove they were stronger and better than anyone else; they referred to this as the “Alpha male syndrome” (P20). Clearly the portrayed standard of fitness is a distinct characteristic of the bravado of the firearms unit. This relates to the point by Hogg and Terry regarding an individual’s desire to belong to a prestigious group (2001, p. 1), which I will discuss further in chapter seven.

Motivations for joining

The two senior female managers who were included in this research did not apply for their positions. They had no desire to become firearms officers therefore they did not have any personal motivations for joining the department; the organisation 'selected' them for their role. Both managers were tasked with examining the engrained culture within the firearms unit. They were assigned to consider diversity within the unit, in particular the under-representation of female officers and also officers from black and minority ethnic groups. From an operational perspective the apparent lack of diversity within the department meant it was ineffective in some areas, they were unable to provide a covert armed response to some situations. At that time the unit comprised of predominantly white male operatives and did not reflect the community.

There were no issues with regards to the standard of work or the professionalism of the officers. However one manager states "they are professional in what they do there's no question about it, but culturally underneath it was a very, very unhealthy environment" (P20). They identified an entrenched macho culture when challenged they were often met with resistance and even hostility. There was a point when one of the female managers actually feared for her personal safety as she and a colleague received verbal threats, there were even scurrilous allegations printed in the national press. Male officers were stuck in their ways, keen to retain their traditions, constantly repeating, "We've always done it like that" (P20), evidence of the engrained culture. The managers interviewed felt that significant changes were made to the working practices during this regime. Both managers enjoyed the experience and had a clear mission to change the culture, which they felt they partly accomplished.

The results in this section do not include the two managers for the reasons outlined above. The remaining 19 participants were asked to describe their personal motivations for joining the firearms unit: there were no significant differences between the male and female respondents. The most popular reason given was the chance to undertake a new challenging role, 8 of the 19 officers (42%) indicated this was their main motivator. The firearms unit was also seen as the most difficult department to get into and some wanted to see if they could achieve this goal:

“I think that comes more down to me as a person. It was this challenge, it was, and it seemed to be quite unattainable. Women don’t speak about firearms, you know, it was almost even if you express an interest, forget it” (P10).

“The challenge really, I’d always been told it was very difficult to get on and I’m quite an active person, quite physical, I’m more hands on and I really like the dynamics of problem solving and pressure and I like to be in stressful situations and I’m always more comfortable not being comfortable” (P12).

“Really, it was seeing the job, seeing the people, the decisions they had to make, I’d done some attachments and so much information is coming through to you when you’re doing the job as a firearms officer, the decisions that you have to make – I just see it as a real sort of pressured, challenging job. That’s what I was attracted to really, I’ve got a low boredom threshold and I like to really push myself” (P18).

6 of the 19 officers, (31%), suggested it was the opportunity to deal with the higher level, more serious criminals, which had first attracted them to the department. Having the chance to arrest people for murder, drug dealing and counter terrorist activity was certainly part of the attraction for these officers:

“You are dealing with the higher echelon of criminal, whether it be level 2 or 3. You’re not dealing with small fry, you’re dealing with the people that do all the damage.... and it’s bringing them to account” (P14).

“You know when you pull a motorist over and they go why don’t you go and lock up a murderer? Well, I have actually, I’ve done a couple this week, it’s brilliant” (P17).

“I joined firearms for firearms: to have to go out there and take firearms off the streets, take those people off the street” (P1).

“You just read about them in the papers, the jobs they’d done, shift work, boring is a strong word, but it does become routine.... They just became very boring, you’d get out the car and take your paperwork folder, I just prefer a pro-active role. Firearms is that, preventing the crime from happening” (P21).

Teamwork was particularly important to three of the participants. Those who had joined the police thinking they were going to be part of a team became disillusioned with the lack of team spirit on the response units and looked to the firearms unit to provide the teamwork they enjoyed. A small number of participants liked the appeal of belonging to a specialist, professional unit, giving them the opportunity to become an expert in a particular area of policing which evidently interested them. The unit has previously been described as ‘elite’ (Gibling & Hirst, 2007, p. 17), undoubtedly the attraction for a small minority of officers interviewed. This elitism was certainly something the senior management felt was a significant part of the firearms culture, an element that segregated them from the rest of the force:

“Professional to be fair, instead of being a Jack of all Trades, you become a master at what you do so you get quite professional at what you do as well” (P4).

“Thought it was quite Gucci, a Gucci thing” (P7).

“I wanted to be part of that elite. Just wanted to be part of that elite firearms team” (P21).

“They didn’t see themselves as part of Operations: they didn’t see themselves as part of the force. They were the firearms unit. They were the elite” (P20).

A small number of the female officers interviewed suggested they had become interested in joining the firearms team as a direct result of the positive action days whereby they had taken the opportunity to learn more about the role. They had the chance to talk to existing firearms officers about the actual job and the fitness required. They also had a glimpse at some aspects of the training, even having an opportunity to handle and shoot the weapons consequently inspiring them to join the department.

With the exception of the two managers, the firearms department was undoubtedly a vocational choice for the officers interviewed. Overall they were passionate and enthusiastic about their role throughout the interviews, although it is necessary to remember that the participants were all successful applicants and the majority were existing SFO’s. I was intrigued to ascertain if there had been any doubts with regards to the role they were about to undertake prior to actually joining the department. 57% of operatives (11 out of 19) suggested they had no doubts whatsoever, of these eight were male and three female. Three people, two male and one female expressed some concern with regards to the implications of the role, the fact that ultimately they may have to shoot someone. Five people, (26%), expressed some doubt regarding the actual role and considered their motivations very carefully prior to submitting their initial application form:

“The doubt that I had was, I did wonder whether I was only getting through because I female. That was the only thing” (P8).

“Yeah. Could I do it? Was I good enough? The usual doubts that I have anyway, the usual, you know, kind of questions that I always pose upon myself anyway. Can I actually do this? Is it right for me? But they weren’t strong enough to detract from putting in the application, going through the process” (P10).

“Yeah, definitely because you’ve always got to think about are you going to shoot somebody, the implications on your family, the implication on you, the stress levels, So I thought about it for about 4 years before I actually did it” (P11).

Only one person interviewed felt their family had concerns for them in undertaking the firearms role. A number of operatives suggested they were able to reassure their family and friends that the role was probably safer than that of an unarmed uniform constable, given the amount of protective equipment and training for the role. Two officers expressed doubts after joining the unit, one male and one female. The female officer explained her doubts arose due to the antiquated nature of the unit:

“I came here and if you weren’t a white heterosexual male and thought this way and did this and did 50 press-ups for your breakfast, then there was something wrong with you and you can’t come and play on our team. It was very much in the dark ages with everything they did” (P12).

This chapter has considered the pre-joining and joining experiences of a small number of officers working within the firearms unit. Although 21 interviews were conducted, the sample group included two managers who had been posted to their role within the firearms unit therefore they had not been through the selection process. Consequently the results outlined above predominantly relate to a sample group of 19 officers, 11 male and 8 female. This split was unavoidable due to the limited number of trained female firearms officers. However given the overall results in this section I do not feel it had any adverse affect on the research. The participants have

provided a breakdown of their application process, which included their initial training courses. They talked in detail about the gruelling 3 or 5-day selection course. The consequence of passing selection entitled participants to qualify as an AFO however those who had attended the longer, 5-day course felt there was a higher kudos attached to it. The standard of fitness was discussed in detail, as historically this has been perceived as a potential barrier for women. The final part of this chapter examined the motivations for joining the firearms unit.

The following chapter will consider the reality of life within the firearms unit from both a male and female perspective. Throughout the research particular emphasis was placed on ascertaining the officers' experiences of working within a specialist unit, which is predominantly white and male. I was keen to gain a deeper understanding of the working relationship between the two genders. Of particular interest was the integration of female firearms operatives. I am keen to gain a clear understanding of the cultural dynamics within this specialist area of policing.

Chapter Six – Results II: reality of life in the firearms unit

Previous research has identified a significant macho culture within the police environment - aggressive attitudes, a willingness to use violence, sexist banter and language, making it difficult for women to gain acceptance (Reiner, 2010, p. 128; D. Smith & Gray, 1985, p. 365; Waddington, 1999b, p. 99). Chan suggests police culture provides coping mechanisms vital for officers survival in a dangerous, unpredictable occupation (1997, p. 45). This chapter will consider the reality of life on the firearms unit from both gender perspectives, gaining an insight into the culture. Taking into consideration the previous literature regarding culture and the responses from this research, the results in this section have been divided into four areas: the role of humour, the role of gender, the role of stress and the role of structural change.

All 21 of the officers interviewed were asked to consider their personal experiences of working within such a specialist police department. Due to the timing of the interviews a large number of the participants were anxious regarding the impending changes to their role and re-structuring of the department: therefore this was a topic, which was included in the discussions. In order to understand the gender issues it was considered necessary to ask participants to recount their positive and negative experiences of working with male/female officers.

The role of humour

Previous research has indicated that jokes and stories are utilised by officers to release stress and deal with the tensions of everyday policing (Holdaway, 1983, p. 142). They were generally thought to be part of team morale (Moran & Massam, 1997, p. 4; Waddington, 1999a, p. 295). This research also found that jokes and banter were an accepted part of the culture. The majority of

officers suggested that the teams frequently have a laugh and a joke however when tasked to complete a job they immediately become totally professional:

“A common thing is everybody can have a bit of a laugh and be a bit jovial but when the work needs to be done everybody is switched on very very quickly and then as soon as its over everybody has got very jovial again” (P1).

“It attracts a certain type of personality which are like mad keen when there’s a job and want to get stuck in and prove themselves and everything, but when they’re bored they want to lark about, play the fool and have a laugh as well. Most people have got a similar mentality and its pretty much ‘piss taking’.... You can have quite a lot of testosterone knocking around, they’re like rutting stags” (P17).

Some officers described the jokes and banter as part of the male culture, suggesting it was normal behaviour for male colleagues to make fun of each other. The ability to participate and join in with the banter had assisted some officers gaining acceptance within the unit. One female officer considered this to be part of the attraction to working within a predominantly male department, suggesting men were easier to work with than women:

“It’s a massive clique and they’re all taking the mick out of each other and just the usual, lads stuff, take the mick out of everything. I just sit there and giggle” (P21).

“To be down there, you’ve got to be a good egg, so you’ve got to get on with everybody. If you’re slightly out of that remit of being a good laugh, somebody that can take a joke, somebody that can do the job.... you might speak out for yourself, that’s one thing that’s not right down there, if you’re too like gobby” (P11).

“I’d much prefer to be in a room full of men, you know, having the mickey taken and the blagging and stuff, than kind of being in a room with women where we just talk about, shopping and kids all day” (P7).

Two of the female officers described some of the banter but suggested this was acceptable behaviour in a man's world and not intentional sexual discrimination:

"Sometimes I'm the only female there. I get asked to do the washing up a lot, but you know, I just laugh at it and it is just a banter and a joke, because the one thing when you walk into a department which is full of men, and they have communicated in a certain way and it's been acceptable.... you get used to how men are in their own little world of conversations" (P8).

"I'm dragging this tyre.... They were like 'oh do you want me to pick it up and carry you, shall we carry you cos you're female'. I had quite a bit of that. But it didn't bother me. At the end of the day I just saw it as a game, a means to an end, they don't mean it" (P7).

A small percentage of the sample group talked about the opportunity to discuss their work with colleagues. Having the chance to recount events of the day with like-minded people over a cup of tea or a pint was evidently something that some officers enjoyed. One officer talked about the demise of socialising as a team due to the removal of police bars in the late eighties. A number of officers described monthly team social events, either meeting up as a group for a drink or going out for the day mountain biking. However it would appear that this trend has diminished in more recent years.

One male officer described the necessity of operatives having nicknames. He suggested that this was the only way of individually identifying people with the same name and implied it was too difficult to learn every officer's unique collar number. This officer described how the names were selected, usually by picking up on something 'different' about the individual. This process was clearly something adopted by the longer serving officers and only one female

officer has a nickname. The nickname was given to an individual towards the end of training, “in the old system, you came through the system and were closely monitored as you came through the system and then you’re allocated a nickname” (P4). The same officer suggested that operatives did not object to their nickname although this practice is becoming less common as people are concerned with the potential consequences of inappropriate names. This trepidation is perhaps an indicator that the culture within the unit has developed in recent years and people are more reluctant to acquiesce with this type of behaviour.

When describing the challenging Catterick training there is unmistakably an element of pride expressed by all those who have completed this task. There is also a definite ‘kudos’ that accompanies this particular course. A small minority of participants implied that those members of the department who are no longer having the opportunity to complete the Catterick course are considered to have had an easier training regime. Subsequently they are subjected to, what they consider to be, light hearted banter. The younger in service officers felt they had undergone the same rigorous training as their colleagues therefore felt there was no merit in the comments:

“There’s a lot of banter about how they had it easy and stuff, the usual sort of stuff. But the older boys take it a bit more seriously” (P16).

“You get the jokes, ‘well you’re not a proper firearms officer’, well I hope its jokes to be honest, I hope they’re not being serious when they say it.... They’ll come into the armoury while you’re sort of mopping up, counting your rounds, checking your book and checking everything’s in order, they’ll go ‘come on you ARV monkey’, just different things like that, ‘you ARV’s are always in here messing about, firearms are here now’, just jokes like that ” (P21).

Jokes and general banter appear to be integral part of the culture within the firearms unit, Waddington suggests this aids tension and helps officers deal with stress (1999a, p. 295), this will be discussed further in chapter seven.

The role of gender

The results were initially analysed by gender considering the responses from both male and female participants however there were no significant differences in their responses, therefore the results have not been broken down by gender. The number of female officers working in the chosen force has continued to rise steadily over the last 60 years. Throughout my service I have observed a considerable transformation in relation to sex discrimination and equality issues. One female officer involved in this study commented on the positive changes within the organisation, "Attitudes towards women in the police force have changed, and like everything it just evolves, you know, things have changed for the better" (P7). When considering the issue of gender what was particularly interesting was the fact that there were no negative experiences expressed by either gender with regards to operational effectiveness. Interestingly some of the female officers had some negative encounters within the department but not from an operational perspective. There were some sexist comments and behaviour displayed towards the female officers during some training situations and general banter between the group. This was not perceived by the women as a problem and will be discussed further in the following pages.

The macho culture was certainly unattractive to the female officers who were previously surveyed as part of the positive action. However one of the managers felt attitudes towards women within the firearms unit remained unchanged until her arrival, "Culturally, they didn't really like women" (P19). One of the officers interviewed had spoken to a number of female colleagues prior to joining the unit to ascertain their views of the department:

“Its testosterone driven, male, you’d never get in there as a female, very similar to the OSU, they don’t want females in there. You’ve got to be a great big strapping man to get into firearms” (P20).

Female officers can have a direct impact on team dynamics, completely changing the working environment. This research has provided some evidence to support Martin’s claim that female’s have a significant impact on language and behaviour (1996, p. 526). The overwhelming response to the female officers within the firearms team was extremely positive:

“I really do think that having female presence in a male dominated environment, which it is, brings a different atmosphere basically. I’m not saying fundamental change, but different edge and slightly different atmosphere and its healthy to have that” (P6).

“I’ve never had a negative experience working with a female officer and I’ve had positive experiences, I’d like to work with more female officers’ cause it gets a bit boring just working with 7 blokes all the time. Working with a female makes a lovely change to be honest, because you can have a nice civilised conversation. It just makes a nice refreshing change” (P17).

Women continue to remain in the minority within the firearms unit. One of the areas explored as part of this research was under-representation from both gender perspectives in order to identify any potential barriers. Therefore I considered the position of female operatives within the department and asked for feedback from both genders regarding their experiences from an operational perspective. There were no negative comments or experiences from either gender regarding this. The majority of male officers commented they were satisfied the female operatives were competent in the role as they had completed the same standard of training:

“There is nobody I know of that would go ‘I don’t want to work with a woman’, they would say ‘I don’t want to work with a person who can’t do the job’ and they really don’t care who it is, what colour they are, race, religion, anything like that, they would work with a complete alien if they could do the job tactically and keep them safe” (P1).

There was a general feeling that females were accepted within the department as they had undergone the same training as their male colleagues, therefore proven their commitment and capabilities. Some female operatives expressed a preference for working within a male dominated environment and considered the environment more relaxed. A small percentage of the female operatives felt they had to work harder than their male counterparts in order to gain acceptance, they felt they were in the spotlight as there was nowhere to hide. One female officer described being chosen as the ‘volunteer’ for virtually every scenario but felt this was not malicious but simply because she ‘stood out’:

“I did feel that I had to work that little bit harder, you know, to kind of prove myself” (P7).

“You always stand out as a female in a male environment so there is nowhere to hide” (P12).

Some female officers felt they were singled out by their gender having to work harder than their male colleagues to prove their competence. This supports previous research by Holdaway and Parker which suggests women felt they had to work harder than the men to gain acceptance (1998, p. 52).

It was suggested by one female participant that the majority of female officers within the department have morphed into men, taking on their behaviours and mannerisms. A number of female operatives are described as having

masculine characteristics. One female operative is described by a male colleague as “having an aggressive attitude however she continues to operate in a very feminine way which allows her to competently carry out her role but ultimately maintaining her femininity” (P6). Whilst others clearly do not consider themselves to be feminine, describing themselves as ‘tomboys’. Another participant indicated that they did not even notice when they are working with a female operative. The submission here is that both male and female officers adopt the same character traits in order to be accepted by the majority group:

“They are one of the blokes. I find it really difficult to articulate, they just act like men, they burp and fart and swear like the men and they are, if it wasn’t for the fact that they’d got boobs, they are just another man.... it is just that they replicate the image of man” (P19).

“It attracts a certain personality type, be that male or female, you know I said everybody’s got a similar sort of ilk. The same applies to the girls as well, that generally they’re quite confident, brash, active, doer, sporty type of people, that kind of mentality” (P17).

“I can think of one female officer who generally takes the conversation straight down into the gutter” (P16).

“The kind of characters that it naturally draws really, it is a very alpha male kind of job because it’s physical, dirty and hard and it attracts, it’s like the military, it attracts military type people and will always attract a majority of those type of people” (P12).

“Even the girls, you know, are like one of the boys down there” (P11).

There was a tremendous sense of pride from both the male and female officers on the unit, in their opinion this was not elitism but professionalism, a sense of achievement. This relates to Hogg and Terry’s point regarding an individual’s desire to belong to a prestigious group (2001, p. 1), which will be

discussed further in chapter seven. The female officers were particularly keen to demonstrate their success to female colleagues with a view to showing that they too were capable of undertaking it:

“I’m proud of what I’ve achieved and when I go into a Police Station I don’t lord it round, but I know that I can look at people and think, you can look at me and think, women can do it. And I have a lot of girls come to speak to me. I passed some girls the other day in the corridor and they went that’s not something you see every day, is it, a girl with a gun” (P8).

“I saw it as a real challenging role. Especially being female, because with men they get fitter quicker they can maintain their bodies easier than women, they can eat more they don’t have to diet and stuff like that. As a female I think it’s a lot more challenging to be able to keep up with the men” (P18).

One of the officers interviewed was the first female officer to join the firearms unit within the identified force: she joined in 2000. The residential training course created a degree of difficulty for the organisers. At first the instructors could not comprehend the logistics of accommodating a female on a residential course at an army barracks. However with some co-operation from all those involved they were able to overcome the majority of the logistical difficulties.

Despite this apparent breakthrough of the first female officer into the male dominated firearms world, the lack of female officers attending these residential training courses has created a few issues and in some cases, feelings of isolation. This was a sentiment shared by a number of female officers:

“You’re not in their locker rooms, so you miss out on a whole chunk of their conversations, perhaps they are post morteming their scenarios, they get to kind of learn a little bit from each other. And a lot goes on in the locker rooms, a lot of conversations that you’re just not privy to” (P10).

The majority of those officers interviewed did not perceive there to be any real barriers towards the recruitment and retention of female officers. A small minority of officers felt that the under-representation of women was simply down to socialisation and nurture. When considering childhood, a small number of officers had outlined their views that boys play with guns and girls play with dolls and they believed this simply continues into adulthood. Another participant expressed the view that it was perhaps the maternal, caring side of females that attracted them to occupations such as nursing or roles within the police like child protection. The opportunity to work with guns was naturally, more appealing to the “alpha male”, those who relish a challenge and wish to take charge:

“I don’t think it is barriers, I think its just, if you look at women generally, they’re not the sort of people that want to play with guns generally are they, oil and grease and the loud bangs and the rage, being put in situations that can potentially be life threatening, we’re going to arrest terrorists and gang members, people that have shot people and women generally just don’t want to be in that situation and blokes do because it appeals to their alpha side, they want to be the one who saves people” (P12).

“There’s a certain type of girl that is attracted to the role, because it’s not for everyone. If you look at the job description, and what you do, my wife so wouldn’t do it and a lot of girls I know who are police officers would go, it’s not my cup of tea, and why would I want to go running round carrying loads of heavy kit in the mud and the rain and getting shouted at, shouting and bailing, it’s just not want I fancy doing. Same with blokes, there’s loads of blokes who wouldn’t want to do it either” (P17).

It was felt by a number of female participants that the positive action campaign had some negative impact on their initial treatment. Encouragingly it was apparent that the initiatives had been directly responsible for the recruitment of at least two female operatives. A large number of the participants felt the positive action initiatives had been exhausted. They were of the opinion that if someone is interested in joining the department, they

need to have the confidence to make the necessary, relevant enquiries themselves, without it being constantly forced upon them:

“We’ve promoted it massively in this department, we used to go out in the cars and specifically speak to females, to the extent where it became harassment, people were telling us to ‘piss off, before you say anything I don’t want to drive a frigging firearms car’, so we’ve exhausted that” (P4).

“We have these open days, we’ve spent ages trying to get people from different backgrounds to apply because we are short of people and you always get the same types turning up at the open days, its always a lad who’s into sport, with a skin-head, who’s an ex-squadie. You’re like, fair play to you mate, you can’t, these are the ones showing the interest in the job, you’ve got to have a pool of people to select from and everyone’s got to have passed the courses. Great if you had a perfect cross section of the force, I’ve got friends that work in PPU’S, you tend to get people going for roles because it suits their character or their career desires” (P17).

One of the female officers interviewed described the amenities available to her upon arrival. Her changing facilities were in fact an old store cupboard, previously used for cleaning equipment. The room was so small that once inside she was unable to turn around. Another officer described issues relating to the unisex changing rooms and toilets caused by the inability to secure the outer door. The facility is simply changed to male or female by a sliding sign on the front door, with no inner door or lock. Once the outer door is opened people have a clear view of the shower area. As the majority of staff who use these facilities is male they quite often forget to check the sign on the door, which subsequently leads to embarrassing consequences.

One officer highlighted concerns relating to the location of the female locker rooms, a port-a-cabin that was positioned at the furthest point away from the main firearms building. This initially re-enforced this individual officer’s personal preconceived thoughts with regards to the unit: it was considered, at

the time, to be a clear cultural message that females were not wanted. Recent changes have ensured that this is no longer the case, the locker room is now located within the main building.

There is some evidence to support Rabe-Hemp's theory with regards to female officers' identity, suggesting that they generally either adopt a "*policewoman*" or "*policewoman*" identity, the emphasis being their conformity to either masculine or feminine police roles (2009, p. 114), this will be discussed further in chapter seven.

The role of stress

Previous research into police culture has discussed the stressful nature of the role and the dangers faced by police officers (Beehr, et al., 1995, p. 11; M. Brown, 1988, p. 9; Chan, 2007, p. 147; Paoline, 2003, p. 202; Paoline, et al., 2000, p. 580; Van Maanen, 1974, p. 85). My findings indicate that the majority of officers involved in this survey did not feel their job was particularly stressful. However as previous research suggests stress is an issue it was therefore explored and included. More than half of the participants did not feel the job was at all stressful. One officer described the feelings as 'adrenaline filled excitement' (P17). Some participants felt the role of passenger in the ARV was more stressful than actually dealing with a firearms incident itself. The passenger is required to multi-task, answering a number of radios, mobile phones, navigating and also obtaining all relevant information prior to arriving at the incident thereby putting them under pressure:

"It's like going for a fairground ride, rollercoaster isn't it, there's that fear and the adrenalin rush and then the sort of come down off it, some people would go through that fear and it would just be permanent fear, there wouldn't be adrenalin, whereas some people would want, well not

want, its got to test you hasn't it, test you all the time, I think that's what it is, you want to be tested to test yourself further" (P4).

"There are stressful times when you've got to answer the radios and the phones are going off and stuff like that, but it's all relative. You can make it stressful, and if you're having a stressful day it can become stressful, but in general I wouldn't say it's a stressful job" (P15).

Officers were asked to identify their coping mechanisms for dealing with any additional stress. The most overwhelming response was physical exercise. The majority of firearms operatives interviewed stated they participated in one or more physical activity to relax. These activities varied and included running, weight training, snow boarding and surfing. Two of the female operatives participated in football and weight training they found this enabled them to 'fit-in' more easily. Family was also a major factor for 7 of the 19 operatives, (37%), they suggested that time with their partners, children and friends was vitally important to them.

A large proportion of the officers talked about the formal structured de-brief which follows every firearms operation. They explained that this was an open and honest discussion. It gave people a chance to learn from their experience, just under half of the participants suggested this was a good opportunity to talk about the incident, which in turn, helped to alleviate stress. There were some concerns that the less experienced officers were unable to voice their opinion within the formal arena as their opinion was not yet worthy, suggesting an informal hierarchy. Therefore they would listen throughout the discussion and take the opportunity to ask the more experienced operatives privately for their views. A small number of participants suggested that socialising was part of their coping strategy. One person stated humour was their preferred method of coping with the stress.

This section has revealed that the majority of firearms operatives do not consider their job to be stressful. However the intense training and structured de-briefs were considered by the majority to be invaluable. Physical exercise and time with family were the main sources of relaxation.

The role of structural change

Since the conception of the firearms unit in the force in question in the late eighties, the structure had remained constant. All staff on the firearms unit was trained to the same standard and became specialist firearms officers (SFO's). In order to provide 24/7 cover the officers were divided into two teams, orange and blue. Each team would alternate between a month of ARV cover, working 12-hour shifts and a month of operations. The operations month included pre-planned jobs targeting known criminals. Throughout the operations month, the officers were required to change their working hours at short notice, respond to a call out system, via a bleep, to provide cover throughout the night. This month was also an opportunity to maintain training requirements. A small minority of officers, for personal reasons, elected to remain on permanent ARV cover and therefore worked on both teams.

The officers who participated in this research were not specifically selected from either team therefore there is an imbalance in representation: 7 were from the blue team, 3 were orange, 6 worked or had worked on both teams and 5 were not aligned to either team at present. A small minority of officers, 4 out of 21 (19%) suggested there was a considerable difference between the two teams, two distinct personalities. They identified that generally the blue team were thought to be more dynamic and heavily involved in physical training whereas the orange team were described as 'older sweats' that were more relaxed. However 29% of participants (6 out of 21) thought there was

no difference in the two teams. A number of officers commented on the friendly rivalry between the blue and orange teams. It was suggested that this was natural when dividing a department into two distinct and separate areas.

Officers within the unit pride themselves on trying to be the best, achieving higher standards in comparison to other forces with regards to their qualification shoots and fitness levels. These high standards were not only expensive and difficult to achieve but also costly to maintain. In 2010 the Government announced substantial budget cuts for all police forces in England and Wales, £2.1 billion over the next four years (H M Treasury, 2010). The force subject of this research is required to make efficiency savings of 40 million pounds in the next financial year, (2011/12) and 38 million pounds the following year. The firearms department has one of the largest budgets in the force this is due to the fact that if an operation or job requires a firearms response then this can only be provided by the firearms unit. However given the extensive cuts, savings are necessary, a more streamlined structure was required which will assist the force to achieve the efficiency savings by working smarter.

O'Connor identified a need for greater collaboration between police forces to improve service delivery and efficiency relating to protective services (2005, p. 67). A subsequent review by HMIC in 2009 suggested that collaborative working between the 43 forces of England and Wales had doubled since the earlier recommendations (2009b, p. 1). A number of the managers interviewed talked about a national review of protective services, which was conducted by HMIC. This revealed a lack of consistency regarding the 'product', in particular with regards to the terminology and tactics being used by firearms officers throughout the country (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2009a, p. 31). This was identified as a specific problem in terms of 'inter-operability', as forces need to have the ability to draw on other

police forces for support in certain circumstances, for example the UK Olympic Games in 2012. It was identified that there ought to be a consistent set of common minimum standards for all forces to enable efficiency savings and ensure collaboration. Although there is no national standard for the composition of a firearms unit the structure should be based on the demands shown within the strategic threat and risk assessment for the force. Therefore in September 2010 the structure within the firearms unit changed. The unit was divided into two permanent teams, ARV and operations, which is now comparable with other forces.

The ARV officers provide a 24/7-armed response to assist the local policing units (LPU) deal with armed criminality. The officers work the same shift pattern as the LPU's. This was a consideration for some officers particularly those with partners who are also police officers and required stability in their working hours. The role of the operations team is to afford specialist firearms support for pre-planned operations in response to intelligence led policing. They work 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday but have to be flexible in order to provide an out of hour's response. The operations team carry a 'bleep' and often have their duties changed at short notice. The level of flexibility expected is not conducive to family life therefore some officers, both male and female, were unable to choose this role. It was apparent that the demands of parenthood can affect both male and female officers thus supporting previous research findings (Holdaway & Parker, 1998, p. 56).

All existing SFO's were asked to submit their role preference. The majority of people involved in this survey had been given the role of their choice, only one sergeant had not. This was simply due to the fact that more supervisors asked for the operations team than ARV therefore they could not accommodate all requests. 11 of the 21 participants had elected ARV, 4 had chosen the operations team and 6 were neither due to their current role. The rationale for the individual officers who chose the ARV role included a set shift

pattern, inexperience, and spontaneity of the role. The reasons for electing the operations role included, weekends off, flexibility and team jobs. One officer suggested that they would become de-skilled if they transferred onto the ARV team. All four of the operational female PC's currently working on the unit will be working on the ARV teams. Three officers explained their reasons for their selection included a desire to work a regular shift pattern, and the other one was new to the department therefore she did not have a choice and was posted to the ARV team:

"I'll be permanent ARV, my partner's going to be on D unit and I'll be on B unit, 2 rest days together.... It's a nightmare. I'd rather be on a team doing the team stuff really" (P5).

"If your lifestyle and circumstances dictate that you need to know what time you're going on, what time you're going home and when you days off are, then the operations side of what we do is not that structured because we have to respond to demand as it presents itself. I guess those staff that can be more flexible were more likely to have opted for the Ops team" (P6).

Two of the managers interviewed suggested the changes were necessary, as the department had stood still for too long. The rest of the force has developed in terms of diversity and progressive thinking however the firearms unit, in their opinion, appears to be a little behind in some aspects. The current restructure is designed to improve performance but is also seen by some as an opportunity to transform some archaic philosophies:

"The very fact that it hasn't changed for 20 years leads you to question, the world has changed in 20 years, how come we haven't? We have to, in my view, look at what we've got, use it smarter and move on a little" (P6).

"I found it to be really prehistoric in its thinking as a unit, very backward in its ways, it stood still, the police force had moved forward with just how

accepting we are of other people and their cultures and needs, diversity” (P12).

A number of the officers interviewed expressed concerns regarding the split into two teams, particularly with regards to creating a two-tier department. Management were of the opinion that both teams were to be treated as equals. They did not want a rigid split to develop within the department. However a number of the PC's recognised this as a concern, perhaps even regressing to the days when senior PC's on the unit would not even allow new recruits to sit at their table. This will need to be closely monitored and equality between the two teams rigorously enforced by supervisors and management.

One officer described the spontaneity of the ARV role and suggested the ARV operatives were responsible for the majority of recent shootings therefore the more experienced officers with a higher degree of training ought to be working on the ARV's. In reality most of the experienced officers have elected to work on the operations team which will inevitably mean the ARV will be covered by less experienced staff. However there were also officers who felt the operations role was the more difficult due to the complex nature of the firearms interventions. This was an area with mixed opinions. Generally officers who had opted for the operations team felt this was the more difficult role. However experienced officers who had elected to take the ARV role expressed the opinion that theirs was the more challenging. Officers who were younger in service on the unit felt they had not yet earned their place on the operations team. They believed this would be their opportunity to gain valuable experience before moving onto the operations team to become an SFO, clearly identifying the hierarchy in the new structure:

“I'll be sticking to ARV, mainly because of experience really, I find if its going to happen anywhere it will be on the ARV.... to get to know your

bread and butter stuff really, get an overall picture of what its all about really” (P9).

The change in structure was obviously a key topic of discussion as it affected all participants. There are issues with regards to the gender balance of the new teams, as the Operations team will be all male this will require further analysis. This chapter has considered the results with regards to the reality of life on the firearms unit with particular interest in the views of both male and female officers working together in such a specialist area of policing. Male and female officers have discussed their experiences and provided an insight into life within a firearms unit. The change in structure caused considerable consternation for many officers. A number of issues have been raised regarding potential barriers towards the recruitment of women into the firearms unit. However the overwhelming response from those involved in this research was extremely positive. The following chapter will analyse the significance of some of the points raised in this and the preceding chapter. I will look to draw relevant conclusions from this research, which may give an insight into the reality of life within a specialist police department.

Chapter seven - Analysis

This chapter will consider my results with regards to male and female officers working together within the firearms unit of the chosen police force. I will look to analyse the results with regards to the officers' experiences. In considering the results it is important to remember that all of the respondents were successful applicants therefore more likely to have a positive attitude. My research question evolved as a direct result of the continued under-representation of female officers within certain specialist areas of policing.

Elitism

Historically police officers received little or no training to handle firearms. Greenwood suggests that the lack of training often led to unfamiliarity with their weapons leading to incompetence but recognised this as an 'endearing quality' which perhaps, at the time, was reassuring to the public (1979, p. 1). However over the years there have been a number of accidental shootings by the police that has increased public concern regarding the arming of British police officers. There were several incidents of accidental shootings by police in the 1980's, including a five-year-old boy, John Shorthouse (see chapter three for further details). More recently in July 2005 Jean Charles de Menezes was mistakenly identified as a suicide bomber and shot dead by armed police. 2007 saw the first deliberate fatal shooting of a woman, she was brandishing a ball bearing gun and refused to relinquish it (Sapsted, 2007).

As a direct result of the incident in 1985 involving John Shorthouse, the force in question created a dedicated firearms unit. Throughout the last 25 years this unit has assiduously evolved in certain areas. Contrary to Greenwood's

findings in the late 1970's, the modern police firearms officers constantly develop their expertise and rely upon high standards of training to ensure public support (1979, p. 1). In early 2000, as a direct result of the increased threat from terrorism, in particular suicide bombers, there was a clear change in policy with regards to British firearms officers. Subsequently, in complete contrast to previous policy, officers were trained to fire multiple shots of hollow-point ammunition, at point blank range, to the back of the suspect's head with no warning: previous policy stated a warning always preceded any shots. This was a new direction, a shoot to kill policy, therefore it is suggested that the incident involving Jean Charles de Menezes in 2005 is a particularly significant event in British policing. This was the first occasion when British police officers intentionally shot a suspect in the head using the revised 'shoot to kill' policy, no warning was given (Punch, 2011, p. 18). Despite this change in policy in England and Wales in 2009/10 there were only two fatal police shootings (NPIA, 2011).

It is evident from this research that the training provided to firearms officers in the chosen force is extensive, it is described as physically demanding and also requires considerable mental strength. Many of the officers interviewed talked about the horrendous SAS military style selection course. They described excessive physical and mental exertion that, they suggest, has been designed to test them to their ultimate limits in order to replicate how they will deal with a genuine firearms situation. The majority of officers interviewed considered this extreme level of testing to be a necessary requirement. The findings indicate that the officers' felt reassured that their colleagues had also been tested to the same meticulous standards. This included the female operatives, which greatly assisted with their integration and acceptance onto the unit. The overwhelming feeling from those interviewed suggested there was no other way to safely test their capabilities. They would rather everyone go through this tough, rigorous, training regime, than discover during a genuine firearms situation that their colleague was not competent. This research suggests that the consequence of the rigorous

training regime is a professional unit of officers who feel decidedly well skilled to deal with a multitude of firearms situations. However the content of the selection course is an area that requires further exploration in terms of necessity and was not covered within this research.

The participants identified physical fitness as a vital characteristic, crucial to their role. Therefore excessive fitness and physically demanding training regimes were accepted practices. These characteristics have become the defining norm, individuals joining the department are expected to conform to these distinct qualities in order to be accepted and become part of the team. Those who do not demonstrate the normative behaviours may be excluded from the 'in-group' and subjected to varying degrees of discriminatory behaviour. This separation promotes group distinctiveness as outlined by Tajfel (1984, p. 713), which may be a contributory factor towards the external perceptions of the department which might need to be restructured to remove sexist ideologies (R. Brown, 2000, p. 769).

It has been suggested that the levels of fitness on the unit were excessive, officers regularly complete an eight mile run around 'the loop' when perhaps a shorter run would be sufficient to maintain the levels of fitness required. There is considerable discrepancy between the actual level of fitness required to pass the physical fitness test and the overall standard of fitness on the unit. It is interesting that all participants engaged in physical fitness outside work in order to maintain their fitness levels. In addition the majority of participants identified fitness as their main hobby. This general acceptance within the unit of excessive physical fitness portrays part of their uniqueness, their group identity and clearly defines a distinct element of their social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). This demonstrates a clear desire to belong to a prestigious, high status group (Hogg & Terry, 2001, p. 3).

The role specific fitness test was easily achieved by one of the female participants who described herself as “not particularly fit” thereby demonstrating that the required levels are clearly attainable with some degree of training, dedication and personal motivation. However it would appear that the established levels of fitness on the unit are actually higher than those required to successfully pass the test. This is an interesting finding as previous research has suggested female officers are often deterred by the levels of fitness required and readily de-select themselves prior to application. There is a disparity with regards to the expected and accepted standard of fitness required. Perhaps this is partly generated by the social identity of the group and also the macho image that remains prevalent within the unit. It may therefore be appropriate to highlight the physical requirements of the role when promoting the department or advertising any future vacancies. However this may do little to promote acceptance within the unit if the officer fails to demonstrate the accepted social identity.

Officers suggested that historically, successful completion of any firearms course was dependent upon how easily you were able to ‘fit into the unit’. ‘Social identity’ is used to categorise differences and identify social similarities in new recruits, this provides relevant information to establish their ‘worthiness’ to belong to the group (Tajfel, 1972b, p. 292). This research suggests that this attitude has in fact changed dramatically. With the implementation of national standards and set performance criteria, the training arena has evolved. Participants in this research were keen to impress the positive changes within the unit with regards to training. They suggested the ethos of the department is far more supportive and encouraging, with considerable emphasis on teaching and learning. All firearms instructors are now A1 assessors: this is an external qualification, which qualifies people to assess candidates against set performance criteria for national vocational qualifications (NVQ’s). Individual assessment is now conducted by a number of instructors to ensure consistency and remove any potential bias, thereby suggesting a more transparent process. The unit has

recently appointed its first female instructor: this may be regarded as a significant step forward with regards to promoting the equality of opportunity within the unit.

A small minority of officers involved in this research wanted to be part of an elite team. Elitism was not perceived by those involved in this research as a negative characteristic rather a desire to deliver the best possible service to the public therefore a positive character trait. Being part of this unit is clearly an indicative part of the social identity for individuals. Their distinct uniform and equipment immediately identifies who they are, making them easily distinguishable as firearms officers. This research has identified a number of examples whereby officers' behaviour has demonstrated their social identity: their attitude towards new firearms officers, the positioning of the female changing rooms and a general sense of elitism. These behaviours, including the desire to become 'elite' may remain an unattractive quality for those on the outside, particularly women, considering a future career in firearms. There were also concerns raised regarding the status of the newly formed operations team, in the future they may portray the elitism that historically was afforded to the whole of the firearms unit. This may have a negative impact on the overall reputation of the department or conversely may help to promote equality in at least part of the unit. This will require further investigation once the reorganisation has had time to settle.

Throughout the research I was keen to gain a more detailed understanding of the culture within the firearms unit. There was some evidence of a 'supportive' culture within the in-group, as reflective practice was encouraged (Wallach, 1983, p. 34). Honest mandatory de-briefs were an opportunity to discuss events to ensure maximum learning from experiences. However those new to the group did not feel they were in a position to contribute due to their lack of experience, thus identifying a clear 'pecking order' or hierarchy. This supports previous research which suggests status has an impact on the ability to express ones opinions, the higher an individual's status the more

freely they are able to express themselves (Gerber, 2001, p. 19). This raises some concern with regards to the culture, which appears unsupportive of inexperience.

This research has explored the personal motivations for joining the firearms team. There were no significant differences between men and women's motivations for joining. The responses suggested that a large proportion of the sample group were keen to undertake a new challenge and relished the opportunity to deal with more serious crime. This supports previous findings that police officers consider themselves to be 'crime fighters' and wish to be involved in more prestigious investigations (Cain, 1973, p. 72; Holdaway & Parker, 1998, p. 44; Loftus, 2009b, p. 8; Paoline, et al., 2000, p. 578). All of the officer's involved in this research were experienced police officers. They were not asked to explain their initial rationale for joining the police service although a small minority had joined the organisation with the intention of becoming a firearms operative. It would be interesting, in the future, to ascertain if their opinions had been altered or affected by their previous experiences as a police officer and also whether this had in fact influenced their motivations for joining the firearms unit.

Loftus identified a number of key characteristics of police culture, which included, crime fighters, strong sense of duty, group loyalty, pessimistic cynical outlook which developed into isolation from the public (2009a, p. 189). A pre-occupation with crime, pro-actively looking for this type of work but considerably less keen to respond to the more mundane, community engagement type of tasks. This finding was a distinct characteristic, which was evident in my research: motivations for joining the firearms unit included the desire to deal with the higher echelon of criminal. Officers had no desire to deal with more trivial policing matters and certainly did not see it within their remit to issue fixed penalty tickets or patrol on foot.

Loftus identified a cult of masculinity where suspicion and stereotyping were seen as key features of the police personality (2009a, p. 190). She deduced that there were also sub cultures, which had developed within the different groups. In particular she observed subtle differences between urban and rural teams and concluded that community policing had been a significant change in focus (Loftus, 2009a, p. 85). However she identified there was some resistance to this particular style as it undermines the traditional view of policing, that of crime fighting and being action centred (Marks, 2005, p. 27). Other distinct characteristics within police culture include group cohesiveness, competitiveness and a bigoted attitude towards women (Fielding, 1994, p. 47). Brown suggests a 'profoundly masculine ethos' remains (J. Brown, 2007b). It is this masculine ethos that is particularly interesting with regards to firearms.

Group identity

It was evident from speaking to both male and female operatives that they were extremely proud of their personal achievements but they were particularly proud to be part of the 'firearms team'. This supports Tajfel's theory which suggests that individuals seek identification with prominent, high-status groups (1972a, p. 307). Professionalism was undoubtedly an important 'value' to the individuals within this group which has subsequently become an integral part of the culture, thereby increasing person-culture fit (Elfenbein & O'Reilly, 2007, p. 111). These factors were evident findings in previous research into the Operations Department (Gibling & Hirst, 2007, p. 14). A strong team culture can be positive as it engenders co-operation which subsequently motivates officers to work together to solve crime (Glomseth, et al., 2007, p. 105), thus internal culture affects external results.

There is some suggestion from previous research that officers enter the police service with predetermined character traits (Rabe-Hemp, 2008, p. 264).

The firearms department utilises additional psychological assessments to ensure they select the most appropriate personalities for the role. This test, commonly referred to as PF16, was designed to screen out the 'most obviously maladjusted' officers (Geller & Scott, 1992, p. 287). However Waddington suggests that an individual will react to a situation rather than their reaction being pre-determined by their character traits, therefore the psychometric test is meaningless (1988, p. 54). My research suggests that the PF16 test together with the type of work involved attracts similar personality types. Generally officers are self-confident and committed to achieving and maintaining high standards. It was clear from my observations, that both genders had these character traits. Female operatives were equally as confident and competent as their male colleagues.

The officers within the firearms unit work as a unified team to carry out their responsibilities. Previous research suggested that the precise nature of the role leads to a culture which seeks to minimise individuality which ultimately leads to a strong cohesive team (Gibling & Hirst, 2007, p. 17). Group cohesiveness and team working were motivating factors for a small number of the participants in this research. My findings show, that historically, there were noticeably strong bonds within the established team that created issues with regards to the treatment of trainee firearms officers, both male and female. The strong bond emanated into exclusionary, discriminatory behaviour towards those officers who were new to the team. The 'trainees' were often ignored until they had proven their worth by completing the tough training regime. It would appear that the daily interactions between the established team and the trainees helped to determine the accepted patterns of behaviour and engrained culture that previously existed within the unit thus reinforcing their social identity (Seel, 2000; Tajfel, 1972b, p. 292).

Earlier research identified the presence of in group/out group distinctions, to a degree these distinctions remain ever present within the department but

perhaps to a lesser extent (Fielding, 1994, p. 47; Gibling & Hirst, 2007, p. 17). Unequivocally teamwork is an integral part of the role as officers are dependent upon their colleagues for their own personal safety. Part of the culture within the firearms unit includes group cohesiveness, the sense of belonging to an elite, professional group. This defines the individual, giving them a sense of 'who they are'. It also identifies their 'defining characteristics' which subsequently outlines the necessary attributes and behaviours which are required to be accepted as part of the in-group (Hogg, et al., 1995, p. 260). This research has shown that individual officers are keen to demonstrate their affiliation to the firearms unit and also their team. A number of the participants in this research wanted to be part of an elite team. They felt elitism was a positive element, an opportunity to belong to a professional unit, they did not perceive elitism to have any negative connotations.

The majority of the 'older' more established officers, who appeared to be responsible for the discriminatory practices, have now left the department and the entrenched culture appears to have changed. The recruitment, selection and assessment procedures comply with national standards and are far more transparent. My findings suggest that new recruits are still expected to undertake mundane tasks whilst they are the most 'junior' in service within the unit. For example the newest members of the team are expected to make tea for everyone else, prepare the weapons in the armoury and count the bullets. However it is evident that the more extreme exclusionary behaviour, for example not speaking to the trainees or allowing them to sit at the table in the canteen, appears to have diminished, most definitely a positive development.

There was some evidence of competitiveness between the blue and orange teams, a finding which was also evident in Loftus's research (2009a, p. 122), which again supports Tajfel's social identity theory (1972a, p. 307). Some described this as natural, friendly rivalry. However there were some

concerns raised regarding the re-structure of the unit in September 2010 when it was divided into two distinct teams, ARV operatives and operations. This has the potential of effectively dividing the firearms unit by creating a two-tier system. The operations team will consist of more experienced officers with additional specialist training thus raising concerns of heightened competitiveness and elitism, which could generate negative feelings between the two groups (Chow & Crawford, 2004, p. 23). Those who are new to the unit do not have a choice of which team they work with, they are posted to the ARV team. Therefore I am apprehensive that the operations team will regress, falling back into a macho, elitist, male only group, which firearms appeared to be in the 1980's and 1990's. Women are clearly absent in this group at present this is a particular concern. The senior management team will need to monitor this situation to ensure there remains an opportunity to retain a healthy balance of skills and abilities, in particular with regards to the representation of female officers.

None of the female firearms operatives interviewed had experienced any direct sexual discrimination and most felt it was equally hard for both male and female recruits to gain acceptance. It would appear that gender itself is not a problem within the unit; inexperience and lack of credibility were the dominating factors that caused the initial divide between the experienced officers and those on selection. Dodge and Valcore conclude that women will remain in the minority within firearms teams whilst it continues to portray the entrenched masculinity that represents a 'definite boys club' (2011, P. 707). These findings suggest that gender will remain an issue within the department due to the macho image that is portrayed; ultimately women will remain under-represented within this unit. Previous research suggests that women need to achieve a minimum of 35% representation in order to achieve a 'critical mass' which should help to reduce discrimination and gain acceptance (Home Office, 2010a, p. 12). 29% of the force subject of this research is female however as previously stated the number of women in specialist departments is considerably less. The macho culture, particularly

the excessive fitness levels, may put people off joining the unit therefore it is important that the organisation continues to work towards a more balanced workforce.

Despite my findings that gender within the unit is an issue but not a problem the firearms unit remains dominated by men. Reiner discusses the machismo world of policing, identifying sexism, drinking and gambling as key features, suggesting it is particularly difficult for women to gain acceptance (2010, p. 128). Previous research suggests storytelling is an integral part of police culture (Loftus, 2009a, p. 196; Schein, 1984, p. 3; Shearing & Ericson, 1991, p. 491) this was supported by my findings. A number of participants commented on the embellished stories relayed to them by established firearms officers.

This research has highlighted a number of subtle characteristics that appear to contribute towards the macho image that remains part of this culture. This includes an observation by two of the senior managers which suggests that some officers have chosen to abandon their regulatory, issued kit and purchase individual items, at their own expense, in order to 'look good', more macho. In their quest to become the best, officers on the unit have the desire to be considered the fittest and the strongest. This characteristic was clearly one of the defining competencies which forms part of their social identity (Hogg & Terry, 2001, p. 3). This is a particularly 'macho' characteristic and not entirely necessary to be a good firearms officer. The instructors who participated in this research were asked to identify the characteristics they were looking for in a good firearms officer: this included a positive attitude, professionalism, enthusiasm, self-discipline, tactical judgement and a willingness to volunteer. They did not mention physical fitness or strength.

It was apparent from this research that trainee firearms officers are required to demonstrate their competency by undertaking extensive training, they are

also expected carry out a variety of mundane tasks in order to gain acceptance. Thus demonstrating a basic human characteristic, an overwhelming need for people to feel a sense of belonging (Maslow, 1943, p. 9; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, p. 56). There was also evidence of a 'pecking order' with younger in service officers' failing to voice their opinions during debriefs.

Analysis of the results suggests that male and female officers can work together in harmony; the officers' experience of working within a specialist department was encouraging. The overwhelming response from the officers' interviewed with regards to working with female operatives was positive they did not disclose any negative experiences. Male officers attitudes towards female colleagues has previously been highlighted as a major barrier towards women (White, 1996, p. 3). This research did not find any significant issues relating to male officer's attitudes towards their female colleagues.

Possible interpretations of these results may suggest that the interviewees were hindered by my position as an "insider-researcher" (Bartunek & Louis, 1996, p. 1; Weatheritt, 1986, p. 19). One interpretation could be that the research results may in fact be tainted; my position within the organisation may have had an impact on the truthfulness of the answers with regards to this question. The participants were very much immersed within their own culture. It is therefore difficult to ascertain if this was a genuine response, or were the participants simply 'towing the party line', purely expressing the expected organisational response rather than their own views? Conversely it may also be evidence of the 'police code of silence' which is a strong characteristic of police culture whereby officers are reluctant to disclose negative information about situations or colleagues (Chin & Wells, 1997, p. 237; Ivkovic & O'Connor Shelley, 2008, p. 445; Kleinig, 1996, p. 69; Koepke, 1999, p. 214; Muehlheusser & Roider, 2008, p. 387; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993, p. 112). A further consideration is group loyalty: a significant part of the firearms

culture is the overwhelming sense of achievement, high standards and professionalism. Consequently officers may choose not to talk negatively about the unit as it could then be viewed as 'imperfect'. My gender may also have had an impact on the situation, as people may not feel comfortable talking about machismo/sexist behaviours with a woman. Having considered the responses carefully and given that none of the female operatives have expressed any concerns regarding their own personal experiences this would suggest that the responses would appear to be genuine therefore it is concluded that gender is not the issue. However the results are restricted given the size of the sample group, and the limited number of female firearms operatives.

Research in the 1990's concluded that firearms departments were a male dominated arena unfortunately this fact remains widespread throughout the UK today. A recent report by the Home Office recommended "further research to be undertaken into female representation in specialist roles, to identify barriers to women's entry into specialist roles, strategies that have increased female representation into CID, and opportunities to further tackle these barriers" (Home Office, 2010a, p. 12). A number of forces have attempted to redress the balance by using positive action initiatives, the force subject of this research being one. Over a period of approximately 18 months this particular force conducted a positive action campaign to encourage more females to join certain specialist departments, including firearms. Initially the senior management team wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the perceived barriers, which were in existence regarding the Operations Department. They were keen to obtain a female perspective therefore they conducted research to broaden their understanding. As previously discussed in chapter three this initially began with a detailed questionnaire to gauge opinions and interest with regards to the various units. Surprisingly there was a high level of interest from female officers with regards to joining the firearms unit, encouraging results. However a great deal of the women felt they did not have the necessary skills, abilities or fitness levels to make an application.

More alarmingly the overall perception was the department was elitist and difficult to get into. The survey was supported by a number of small focus groups, open days and women only familiarisation days. A dedicated Inclusivity Inspector was temporarily appointed, whose job included making contact with every female officer who had expressed an interest in joining the Operations Department. Relevant advice, information and guidance were provided to encourage them to apply. The positive action has since been significantly scaled down, there is very little publicised in the internal media, there is no longer an Inclusivity Inspector and the open days are far less frequent.

Gender

I considered the gender balance within numerous departments within the chosen force, in particular my own department, Operations. Consideration was given to a variety of units including traffic, operational support unit (OSU), dogs and firearms. 29% of the identified force is female but only 7% of the specialist firearms officers are female. Despite 18 months of positive action to promote equality of opportunity the relatively low numbers remain. This together with previous research findings into the culture of the department by Gibling and Hirst in 2007 (see chapter three) and a discussion with my own management team focused the direction of my research. Of particular interest were the experiences and the working relationship between male and female firearms operatives and their personal comprehension of working within this unique area of policing. The aim of my research was to examine the cultural dynamics of a specialist police department with a particular focus on gender. My research questions therefore were: to consider the under-representation of women, to consider the motivations for joining and gain an understanding of the working environment of firearms officers.

The area of police culture has been extensively researched (Chan, 1996; Holdaway, 1983; Reiner, 2002; Waddington, 1999a; Westmarland, 2008). Skolnick suggests that it has changed over time nevertheless it retains certain 'universal and lasting features' (2008, p. 39). These general characteristics include a sense of mission, action and excitement, a cult of masculinity, an us/them mentality, racism is endemic, authoritarian conservatism and finally suspicion and cynicism (Waddington & Wright, 2010, p. 68). It is argued that police culture provides coping mechanisms for officers (Beehr, et al., 1995, p. 11; M. Brown, 1988, p. 9; Chan, 2007, p. 147; Paoline, 2003, p. 202; Paoline, et al., 2000, p. 580; Van Maanen, 1974, p. 85). For example police humour and storytelling are believed to relieve stress (Holdaway, 1983, p. 142). Researchers suggest there remains a significant macho culture, which dominates the police environment that culminates in an unattractive situation to women, aggressive attitudes, a willingness to use violence, sexist banter and language (Reiner, 2010, p. 128; D. Smith & Gray, 1985, p. 365; Waddington, 1999b, p. 99). The inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence identified a decline in racist language but suggested sexism and homophobic attitudes remain ubiquitous (J. Foster, Newburn, & Souhami, 2005, p. 95). Seklecki and Paynich identified the continued presence of 'male behaviours' including sexism and sexist jokes however they suggest that female officers were not offended by the remarks and conclude that women enter the police organisation anticipating these behaviours and accept that they are as simply part of their role (2007, p. 29).

This macho culture is particularly evident in certain departments where male characteristics are more prevalent, firearms and traffic being two such examples. Holdaway and Parker suggest women are simply not interested in traffic related matters (1998, p. 45). Whilst Coulson suggests women are not interested in carrying a firearm (2006, p. 20). However research by Brown and Sargent revealed that certain aspects of police culture inhibit women from becoming firearms officers rather than there being a personal lack of motivation to join (1995, p. 13). Reiner concludes that women are

discriminated against as police officers in terms of their 'career prospects' and suggests this under-representation is continuing to contribute towards the retention of the machismo elements of the culture (2010, p. 173).

There is very little research that relates specifically to policewomen working within specialist departments, particularly firearms (J. Brown & Sargent, 1995; Gibling & Hirst, 2007). Firearms departments remain one of the most macho areas within police culture: guns, fast cars, excessive physical fitness and the capacity to kill another human being, are key features. There remains a perception that the fitness test is difficult to pass and the level of physical strength required to complete the firearms training is exceptional. Some male officers believe that many female officers would struggle to carry the additional weight of the body armour due to their slight build (J. Brown & Sargent, 1995, p. 11). A finding supported by recent research by Dodge and Valcore, which suggests male respondents felt female officers would not be able to reach the required standard of fitness (2011, P. 705). Research conducted in the mid 1990's identified 2.6% of authorised firearms officers in the UK were women, with 5% of forces having none and 42% only having one or two token women (J. Brown & Sargent, 1995, p. 13).

The situation today remains very similar with the number of female firearms operatives throughout the UK remaining consistently low. In 2008 39 of the 43 police forces of England and Wales responded to a national survey which identified a total of 280 female authorised firearms officers, this equates to 4.41% of the total number of AFO's at this time (ACPO Armed Policing Secretariat, 2008). This survey also highlighted the lack of female Specialist Firearms Officers, with a total of 11 being identified. Cheshire constabulary was one of the four police forces who did not respond to the ACPO survey however they had previously highlighted recruitment difficulties, having only 3 female firearms operatives out of a total strength of 80, it was suggested that their application process was too 'macho' (Gray, 2007). The 2008 figures are

the most recent available as the ACPO Armed Policing Secretariat do not currently ask for diversity data in the collation of national establishment figures as they feel there is no necessity or relevance for this information. The figures are purely role specific, as they do not feel gender is an issue.

A small number of participants in this research have suggested that socialisation and nurture may to some extent, be responsible for the low numbers. Abbott suggests gender divisions within society start at birth and argues that society creates the basic distinctions between men and women, stipulating what is acceptable behaviour for each gender, subsequently defining their employment type (Abbott, 2000, p. 56). Clearly the role of Specialist Firearms Officer does not fit the gender stereotype outlined in Abbott's research.

Gibling and Hirst conducted a study regarding female under-representation within the Operations Department within the force subject of this research, see chapter three for further details (2007). Their debate centred on the issue of culture within the department, of particular interest to me was their observations regarding the firearms unit: clearly a male dominated environment, which they suggested, had changed very little since its inception in the 1990's. They described the department as "a group of like-minded people who are happy working together" however they concluded there was a definite detachment from the rest of the force, a resistance to difference and new firearms staff were required to 'fit in' (Gibling & Hirst, 2007, p. 17).

My research is closest to that of Gibling and Hirst in that I have chosen to look at women within the firearms unit, a specialist area of policing. Police culture is an area that has attracted much interest however women working within specialist departments appear to have received very little attention. My contribution will be an academic piece of work that will enhance the literature

on police culture, with particular regard to the specialist area of firearms policing.

Gaining a clear comprehension of culture was critical in terms of understanding the day-to-day experiences of the officers involved in this research. As outlined in chapter one, organisational culture is the “accepted practices, rules and principles of conduct that are situationally applied and generalised rationales and beliefs” (Manning, 1989, p. 360). Police culture is similar in that it involves shared understandings and beliefs but to a greater depth (Chan, 2007, p. 148; Reiner, 1992b, p. 109). Common themes to emerge from research into police culture include group loyalty, integrity, a desire for acceptance, male domination, including male bonding and police humour. This research has identified that a number of these themes were clearly evident within the firearms department of the chosen force.

A number of the officers who participated in this research felt the department had exhausted the positive action. A small number expressed the view that confidence was an important competency to join the unit therefore individuals ought to have the capacity to research the role for themselves without the need for open days. Is this part of their desire to remain elitist and special? Certainly some officers felt people should be left to find out about the department for themselves. They did not feel that it was at all necessary to promote the unit. Some female officers felt the initiatives had caused them some additional difficulties whilst proving their capabilities. It was felt by the majority of participants that the unit was open and transparent therefore they did not see the need for continued positive action. Some male participants felt the continued positive action was in fact damaging the relationships between unarmed operational officers and armed.

This research has indicated that the positive action initiatives directly contributed towards the recruitment of at least two female firearms officers. Staffordshire police have recently undergone similar initiatives, increasing the number of female operatives from 2 to 7, which equates to 10% of their establishment (Blain, 2011, p. 17). The result of this increased effort in the force subject of this research was initially optimistic, however this has since slipped back to five female operatives, 4 PC's and 1 Sergeant. The senior leadership team are once again entirely white male. There appears to be some retention issues, which will need to be further investigated however this did not form part of this particular piece of research.

Despite the negativity towards positive action, the participants in this research did propose a number of options that may assist with the practicalities of recruiting more female operatives. There continues to be concern relating to the size and fit of the uniform, for example the bulletproof vest, in a small size it is so long in the body length that one female operative complained that when she sat down in her vest it bruised her thighs. Other concerns related to the size of the standard issue handgun, this is apparently quite a large weapon and people with smaller hands do struggle to handle it. There are smaller weapons available that have the same capacity and may be a consideration. However female officers may be reluctant to choose a different weapon as they may feel under pressure to prove their abilities. They often feel they are subjected to closer scrutiny as they 'stand out' from the crowd therefore by choosing a smaller handgun this may be perceived, by their male colleagues, that they are less capable of doing the job (Loftus, 2009a, p. 53), but certainly worth considering.

Fielding raised concerns regarding rigid in-group/out-group distinctions which can often lead to exclusionary behaviour (1994, p. 47). There can also be positive elements to these distinctions: group loyalty and the ability to depend of each other. Undoubtedly within the firearms unit we have a professional

group of people striving to achieve a common goal. However the 'out-group' continues to perceive them as elitist and macho. Distinct characteristics which remain in the form of excessively high levels of physical fitness, the obvious differences with uniform and equipment (Berger, Webster, Ridgeway, & Rosenholtz, 1993, p. 2) and also perhaps the strong desire to be part of the firearms team (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40) are continuing to create and promote barriers. External perceptions of the department need changing to truly challenge the composition of the unit. Until these changes occur the positive action campaign remains unsuccessful.

What was apparent was the presence of in-group/out-group distinctions, with an overwhelming desire from both genders to be accepted and 'fit-in'. There were clearly elements of elitism present: a small number of officers had been attracted to the unit because they felt it was elitist and difficult to get into. For others part of the attraction had been the challenge to succeed in such a difficult arena. Group identity was a major factor, being part of a professional unit of people who were all trained to an exceptionally high standard to deal with a variety of complex situations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). They were no longer just 'police officers', they were proud to be 'firearms officers'.

Chapter eight - Conclusions

This chapter will draw conclusions from my research with regards to the continued integration of women into specialist police departments, in particular firearms, a predominantly male dominated arena. The aim of my research was to examine the cultural dynamics of a specialist police department with a particular focus on gender. My research questions evolved as a direct result of the continued under-representation of female officers within certain specialist areas of policing. I considered the under-representation of women I also considered the motivations for joining and also gained an understanding of the working environment of firearms officers.

This research shows male and female officers are able to work together, there was no clear evidence of chauvinistic attitudes by male officers towards female colleagues. This may be due to the fact that the female officers involved in this research either accepted the 'boys will be boys' attitudes or were completely immersed in the culture themselves. The male officers were extremely positive with regards to the capabilities of their female colleagues and felt reassured by the fact that they had all completed the same training to an equally high standard. These findings appear to support Rabe-Hemp's conclusions that the completion of a 'tough manful act' was a clear indicator of acceptance (2008, p. 264). This was certainly apparent within this unit, officers gained acceptance from their peers once they had successfully completed all training.

Rabe-Hemp considered the role of policewomen with particular regard to the distinctly masculine and feminine characteristics. She identified that female officers were discovering more socially accepted ways to 'do gender', raising concerns that this may result in further segregation and detachment from "real police work" (Rabe-Hemp, 2009, p. 125). Holdaway and Parker suggest

policewomen are required to act more aggressively and curtail their femininity (1998, p. 53). A number of the women who participated in my research described themselves as 'tom boys', some openly disclosed they were gay, conversely three officers were keen to point out that they were in fact married with children. However what was apparent within this research was the clear sense of identity expressed by the women: they identify themselves firstly as firearms officers, secondly as *policewomen* and thirdly as *police women*.

There continues to be an issue with regards to the gender balance within the firearms unit as a whole, however there are also greater concerns regarding the gender balance of the new teams as the operations team is all male. Many of the officers interviewed talked in detail regarding the split into two teams, raising concerns that it could potentially, create a two-tier department. Officers were anxious that a rigid split could develop within the department, perhaps even regressing to the days when senior PC's on the unit would not even allow new recruits to sit at their table. This will need to be closely monitored and equality between the two teams rigorously enforced by supervisors and management. Perhaps creating the opportunity for regular movement between the teams will ensure a healthy culture throughout the unit, this will require further analysis.

The recent budget cuts and HMIC review, which suggested a radical overhaul of policing, could have a significant impact on the number of vacancies within specialist units (H M Treasury, 2010; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2010, p. 4). The force subject of this research has recently undergone a dramatic re-structure consequently this has resulted in a temporary restriction on moves from one department to another. It is not known, at this time, how long this restriction will apply however the lack of movement raises concerns of ingrained cultures. A similar concern resulted in the introduction of tenure in the 1990's to ensure movement within specialist departments in an attempt to prevent corruption and ensure equality

of opportunity (Mundy, 1999, p. 1). Specialist departments are in the process of evaluating their staffing levels. This might have a bearing on the number of future vacancies, which subsequently may impact on the number of women within specialist posts.

Chan suggests police culture provides a coping mechanism vital for officers survival in a dangerous, unpredictable occupation (1997, p. 45). A macho culture remains dominant within policing and in particular within the firearms arena, ultimately creating an environment, which outwardly appears unattractive to women. In reality the role itself ought to be attractive to all police officers as the unit are dealing with criminals who are connected to serious organised crime, drug dealing and terrorism. Previous research has suggested that most police officers see themselves as 'crime fighters' therefore to have the opportunity to deal with the higher echelon of criminal should be attractive to all officers (Cain, 1973, p. 72; Ericson & Hegarty, 1997, p. 299; Fielding, 1988, p. 205; Holdaway & Parker, 1998, p. 44; L. Jackson, 2003, p. 624; Loftus, 2009b, p. 5; Paoline, et al., 2000, p. 578; Waddington, 1999a, p. 299).

Previous research suggests that early intervention is crucial to ensure women take every opportunity to pursue a career of their choice, particularly in male dominated areas (T. P. Dick & Rallis, 1991, p. 291; Meece, Parsons, Kaczala, & Goff, 1982, p. 343). Abbott concluded that "the choices women make and their orientation to both are the outcome of constructed choices and the socially constructed expectations of women's role and women's responsibilities". Clearly the role of Specialist Firearms Officer does not fit the gender stereotype outlined in Abbott's research. Recognising when and how these differences occur is key to increasing women's participation in male dominated careers (Rosenbloom, et al., 2008, p. 553). Early intervention has been identified as a vital element to promoting equality by developing personal values and occupational interests (Meece, et al., 1982, p. 343).

Education within schools would help to ensure children are given every opportunity to participate in a career of their choice, giving them the chance to explore every available vocation.

Research into career preferences of those entering medicine concluded that working hours and family commitments have a major influence on the career choice for female doctors. The area of surgery remains male dominated whilst general medicine continues to attract a high proportion of females. Thus suggesting that the continuing pressures of the traditional female role as the carer heavily influence career choice (Crompton, 2003, p. 51). Previous research by Andronicou suggests there is an assumption by female police officers that firearms units are not family friendly in terms of flexibility of working hours thereby corroborating Crompton's findings (2007). It would appear that people choose their roles based on their personal circumstances and family commitments therefore this requires further exploration within the police arena. It would be useful to talk to women who are not in the firearms arena to ascertain their views.

The overall findings from this research are extremely encouraging: the evidence indicates that male and female officers can work together in harmony and that the diversity differential is not directly related to gender. However the number of female officers within the firearms unit of the chosen force has now fallen to 5 operatives. Holdaway and Parker identified a lack of support from managers and low self-confidence as prohibiting factors with regards to the advancement of female officers, proposing that female officers have benefited from an encouraging approach (1998, p. 52). It is suggested that strong leadership can have a direct impact upon the equality of opportunities available. The use of female mentors has afforded some success in other forces and ought to be utilised further. Improvements in firearms uniform and equipment may help to change the image ensuring all female uniform is fit for purpose will greatly assist with retention and

recruitment of female operatives. Consideration should also be given to the use of a smaller handgun although this could be viewed negatively.

The culture within the firearms unit is a problem as the image that is portrayed is that of an elite group of officers who are extremely physically fit. It is accepted that firearms officers, as police officers, need to be both mentally and physically fit in order to undertake their role. Their additional equipment, body armour and weapons, weighs between 2-3 stone, therefore fitness is important. However the excessively high levels of fitness that are expected internally, to be accepted and 'fit in' are greater than the actual level of fitness required externally. This exceptionally high level of fitness is an area which clearly divides the firearms unit from regular officers and is very much part of their exaggerated macho culture. The officers appear to train to a staggeringly high standard of fitness beyond that which is required to pass the fitness test. This desired level of fitness has become part of the exaggerated macho culture of the firearms unit and not necessarily a requirement of the role. The opportunity for officers to train within their working day has been greatly reduced due to the restructure however all of the officers who participated in this research recognised the need to maintain their personal fitness levels and continue to do so in their own time.

This particular element of the culture is clearly off putting, particularly to female officers. It is evident from previous research that officers need to have an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the firearms role in order to make an informed choice. Historically open days have been utilised to afford staff the opportunity to glean this knowledge, however they have had limited success. Further research is needed to fully understand the perceptions of specialist departments from non-specialist officers in order to dispel negative opinions. This is an area, which requires further investigation in order to fully understand the myths that continue to exist.

Chapter one considered the broad concept of organisational culture, followed by an examination of the culture within the police organisation. Finally this chapter considered the position of policewomen within the cultural aspects, as they remain the minority group within the organisation, particularly within specialist departments. Chapter two provided an introductory overview of the origins of the British Police service and explored the integration of women. Key characteristics of policing were identified and include 'consent and balance' and 'independence and accountability' (Scarman, 1982, p. 102). Chapter three examined the departure from traditional policing strategies towards the emergence of specialist police departments. All 43 police forces have evolved and developed their own individual structure. Of particular interest in these emerging roles was that of female officers due to their continued under-representation within specialist units. Chapter four outlined the research methodology, namely a case study. In depth semi structured interviews were utilised to explore the experiences of a sample group of firearms officers. Chapter five considered the pre-joining and joining experiences of the officers, including the application process, training, fitness and their personal motivations for becoming a firearms operative. Chapter six continued with the examination of the results, focusing on the reality of life on the firearms unit, gaining an insight into the culture. These results were divided into four sections, the role of humour, the role of gender, the role of stress and the role of structural change. Chapter seven analysed the results.

My contribution to the literature has identified the issues within the firearms unit are about gender but not in a problematic way, there was no evidence to indicate that officers were treated differently or unfairly due to their gender. It was suggested by one of the participants that you have to be a 'certain type of girl' to be a firearms officer, others branded themselves as a 'tom boys'. Rabe-Hemp's research discusses the female choice, *policewomen* or *policewomen* (2009, p. 114): unmistakably the women within the firearms unit performing the role of SFO are firstly proud to be firearms officers, secondly police officers and thirdly women.

There is further work to be done on the advantages of mixed gender teams, identifying positive characteristics that may subsequently assist with balancing strengths within a department. It would also be useful to consider the impact of positive action initiatives in more detail and also the change in structure within the firearms unit subject of this research. The recent change in legislation in the form of the Equalities Bill 2010 may bring opportunities to utilise new concepts and ideas to assist with redressing the balance within male dominated occupations.

What was apparent was the presence of in-group/out-group distinctions, with an overwhelming desire from both genders to be accepted and 'fit-in'. There were clearly elements of elitism present with a small number of officers having been attracted to the unit because they felt it was elitist and difficult to get into. For others part of the attraction had been the challenge to succeed in such a difficult arena. Group identity was a major factor, the majority of officers wanted to be part of a professional unit, trained to an exceptionally high standard and dealing with the higher stratum of criminal (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). They were no longer just 'police officers', they were proud to be 'firearms officers'. I conclude that the issues within the firearms department are clearly not about gender but an overwhelming desire to belong to a unique, high-status group. In order to promote the continued integration of women into specialist police departments, in particular firearms, the external perceptions of the unit requires challenging. The organisation also needs to engender an encouraging, supportive culture to ensure the progress of female officers.

Appendices

Appendix A: Timeline – History of British Police

1252 First reference to the term constable, although the title was in common use long before

1285 The Statute of Winchester summed up and made permanent the basic obligations and procedures for the preservation of peace. The Statute Victatis London was passed in the same year to separate deal with the policing of the City

1630 The Oath of the Office of Constable was published, although it had been administered for some time

1737 An Act was passed 'for better regulating the Night Watch and Bedels within the City of London and the liberties thereof'. This Act directed the payments to be made for serving and directed the number of Constables who where to be on duty each night, i.e. the City established a paid police force before any other area

1829 The Metropolitan Police Act established that Force. The Metropolitan Police was divided into seventeen divisions each with a Superintendent, four inspectors and sixteen Sergeants

1833 The Lighting and Watching Act allowed the establishment of paid police forces in England and Wales generally

1835 The Municipal Corporations Act required 178 Royal Boroughs to set up paid police forces

1836 Inspectors of Constabulary were first appointed

1839 The County Police Act allowed the establishment of police forces for the counties - eight were formed in 1839, twelve in 1840, four in 1841 and a further four by 1851

1856 The remaining counties were compelled to set up police forces by the County and Borough Police Act. Grants were made by the Exchequer to those forces certified each year as efficient. From this Act, moves were made regularly to merge smaller forces into larger ones on the basis of effectiveness and 'value for rate and taxpayers money'

1919 The Desborough Committee, while rejecting the idea of a national police force, did achieve a measure of centralisation by the creation of a police department in the Home Office

1934 Home Office Committee effectively rationalises police uniforms

1946 Police Act leads to many police forces amalgamations - 45 boroughs were abolished

1964 Police Act results in more amalgamations to result in today's 41 county or area police forces plus the Metropolitan and City of London Police

(De Pablo, 2008)

Appendix B: The 43 Police forces of England and Wales

1. Avon & Somerset Constabulary
2. Bedfordshire Police
3. Cambridgeshire Constabulary
4. Cheshire Constabulary
5. City of London Police
6. Cleveland Police
7. Cumbria Constabulary
8. Derbyshire Constabulary
9. Devon & Cornwall Constabulary
10. Dorset Police
11. Durham Constabulary
12. Dyfed-Powys Police
13. Essex Police
14. Gloucestershire Constabulary
15. Greater Manchester Police
16. Gwent Police
17. Hampshire Constabulary
18. Hertfordshire Constabulary
19. Humberside Police
20. Kent Police
21. Lancashire Constabulary
22. Leicestershire Constabulary
23. Lincolnshire Police
24. Merseyside Police
25. Metropolitan Police Service
26. Norfolk Constabulary
27. North Wales Police
28. North Yorkshire Police
29. Northamptonshire Police
30. Northumbria Police
31. Nottinghamshire Police
32. South Wales Police
33. South Yorkshire Police
34. Staffordshire Police
35. Suffolk Constabulary
36. Surrey Police
37. Sussex Police
38. Thames Valley Police
39. Warwickshire Police
40. West Mercia Constabulary
41. West Midlands Police
42. West Yorkshire Police
43. Wiltshire Constabulary

Appendix C: Total number of Authorised Firearms Officers (AFO'S) in England & Wales

	Year						
	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
AVON & SOMERSET	84	122	118	117	103	123	127
BEDFORDSHIRE	53	58	56	59	57	53	50
CAMBRIDGESHIRE	71	60	60	50	46	49	51
CHESHIRE	89	75	76	73	80	72	88
CLEVELAND	80	95	100	100	105	97	83
CITY OF LONDON	72	86	89	86	45	49	50
CUMBRIA	87	89	90	89	90	97	86
DERBYSHIRE	69	70	74	75	69	61	61
DEVON & CORNWALL	115	132	123	122	132	142	146
DORSET	59	60	64	62	67	71	79
DURHAM	102	97	103	100	102	89	82
ESSEX	184	186	202	205	220	225	223
GLOUCESTERSHIRE	80	82	93	92	94	95	97
GTR MANCHESTER	202	205	187	245	217	250	296
HAMPSHIRE	94	94	92	97	83	85	93
HERTFORDSHIRE	47	50	53	52	49	53	50
HUMBERSIDE	96	96	101	92	83	87	80
KENT	93	90	94	94	98	87	110
LANCASHIRE	129	122	115	123	103	143	105
LEICESTERSHIRE	68	51	53	59	67	64	73
LINCOLNSHIRE	87	78	86	87	75	77	69
MERSEYSIDE	84	94	93	129	139	153	154
METROPOLITAN	1823	2060	2134	2331	2584	2530	2740
NORFOLK	109	114	125	119	127	114	106
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	56	52	50	56	59	53	50
NORTHUMBRIA	99	90	93	98	92	96	95
NORTH YORKSHIRE	64	60	56	78	67	67	63
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE	131	138	138	149	146	137	133
SOUTH YORKSHIRE	100	98	122	116	118	106	99
STAFFORDSHIRE	63	67	76	70	82	82	75
SUFFOLK	80	96	88	84	78	74	67
SURREY	48	53	49	51	45	54	54
SUSSEX	141	134	130	129	129	123	123
THAMES VALLEY	180	172	176	180	186	180	180
WARWICKSHIRE	51	46	53	55	59	63	66
WEST MERCIA	131	139	141	152	133	163	99

WEST MIDLANDS	110	124	134	145	175	177	165
WEST YORKSHIRE	132	140	130	150	148	147	135
WILTSHIRE	78	80	74	72	69	67	74
DYFED POWYS	62	58	79	68	72	67	63
GWENT	60	71	74	86	64	63	54
NORTH WALES	75	73	65	57	56	57	53
SOUTH WALES	125	139	134	130	115	138	121
TOTAL	5763	6096	6243	6584	6728	6780	6868

(Home Office, 2010c)

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

Introductory Questions:

1. Tell me about your police career to date
2. Describe your current role.

Motivations for joining:

3. Why did you choose this particular job? What was the attraction?
4. Tell me about any doubts you may have had.

Training

5. Tell me about the training for the role.
6. What was/is the training like?

Actual Role

7. What's it like to work on your team?
8. Tell me about your experiences within your current specialist role of working with male/female officers. Positive and negative.
9. Barriers towards female recruitment/retention within your department?

Stress - Coping strategies

10. The jobs you are involved in will often get the adrenalin pumping, how do you deal with this?
11. How do you relax after work?

Appendix E: Interview Schedule – Training Staff

Introductory Questions:

- 12. Tell me about your police career to date
- 13. Describe your current role.

Motivations for joining:

- 14. Why did you choose this particular job? What was the attraction?
- 15. Tell me about any doubts you may have had.

Training

- 16. Tell me about the training for the role.
- 17. What was/is the training like?

Additional Questions to Training Staff

- 18. Describe the current training regime
- 19. What's the ethos of firearms training
- 20. What qualities are you looking for?

Actual Role

- 21. What's it like to work on your team?
- 22. Tell me about your experiences within your current specialist role of working with male/female officers. Positive and negative.
- 23. Barriers towards female recruitment/retention within your department?

Stress - Coping strategies

- 24. The jobs you were/are involved in will often get the adrenalin pumping, how do you deal with this?
- 25. How do you relax after work?

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